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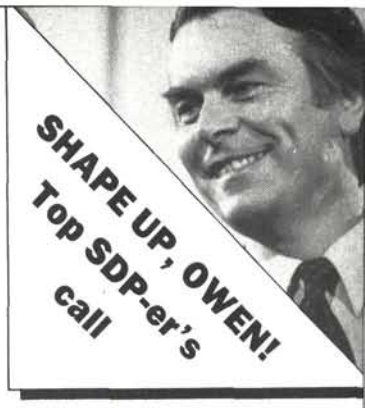

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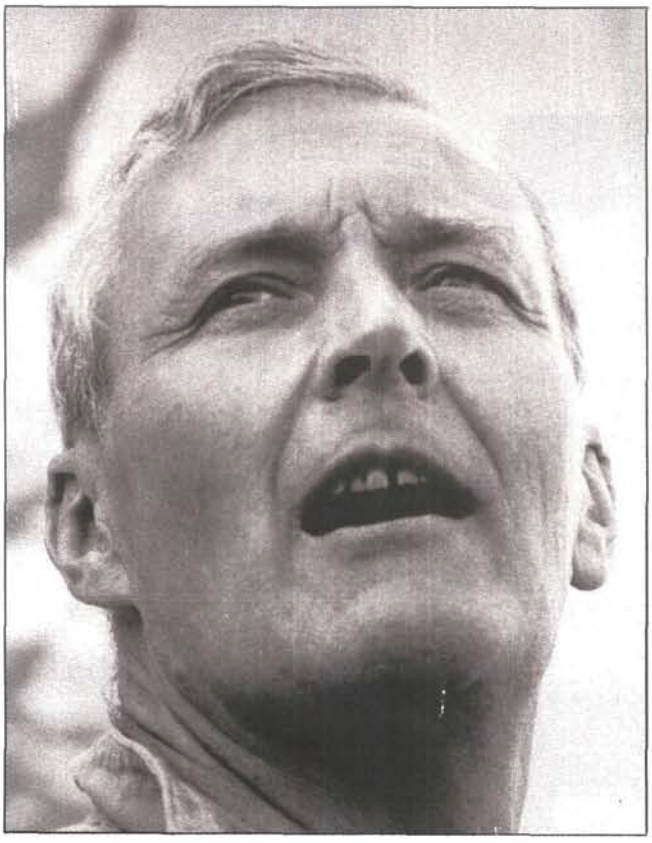

'They have tried to obliterate the left . . . but there is a left, a broad left, between Hattersley and Hatton, and it is again growing in strength'

Tony Benn

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New Statesman
Vol 112 No 2890 15 August 1986

The New Statesman is starting again

IT IS presently a left-wing weekly magazine with a circulation in the range of 27,000, a large monthly loss, a fine name whose prestige has declined, many exasperated readers and many more exasperated ex-readers. It sells fewer than the *Listener* and about the same as the *Spectator*. The many good things in the *Statesman* are often passed over because there is a general expectation that it will be mediocre. It has many loyal readers who appreciate much of what it does, and rightly: but their numbers have fallen rather than risen for a very long time. Much more of it, and in a few years' time its just-appointed editor will be its last.

No single cause or individual is responsible for this. The *New Statesman* has shared the malaise of the Left for many years: the incoherence which gripped the Left from the latter half of the 1970s could not but encompass its foremost journal.

Starting again means finding a coherent voice once more. That cannot be picked up off the shelf. For a journal like the *Statesman*, it can only be found by opening itself up to events and to the central issues which arise from them. Its radicalism will consist most of all in its ability to identify what these are, and in its refusal to accept any easy answers to them — from any part of the spectrum.

We have our own resources, judgments and skills, together with those of a widening circles of writers and others who want to see a revived journalism of the Left. We are able to illuminate and make live the many urgent questions which press in on the men and women of this country; to force into the open the facts and the debates which the powerful would prefer to obscure; and to do so with some sense of irony, even of fun. A cover price of 90p is too much to charge without providing style and pleasure.

British journalism is not so distinguished for its honest enquiry to make such a project redundant. On the left of politics, that approach has become rarer than elsewhere. Newspapers and magazines which claim a much more fervent belief than the *Statesman* ever has in fundamentalist socialism have less care for accuracy, fairness, the right of reply or judgment than the best of Fleet Street, regional or broadcast media. Many on the Left implicitly recognise the fact (most of all in their buying habits) while apparently abandoning any expectation that publications of the Left can start from the same basic standards. The *New Statesman* can.

WE PUBLISH, on pages 18 to 20, a profile of — really a tribute to — the American journalist I. F. Stone, who has as much claim as anyone to the title of best journalist of his age. It was good luck that Stone, now 78, recently visited London: it is by design that we publish a small celebration of his work and life in the first issue of a new editorship.

Stone is an inspiration because, through the pages of his *Weekly* published in Washington over nearly 19 years from the early 1950s to the early 1970s, he used intelligence, hard graft and courage to train a spotlight on the affairs of the world's most powerful state —

New Statesman

Cover photo: Steve Benbow/Network

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WHITES STAND FAST

PHILLIP VAN NIEKERK on South Africa's defiance

PLUS:

Professor Paul Ormerod on Labour's missing incomes policy: France's media goes private

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and did it with wit and flair. A radical, he never closed his mind: he recognised virtue and courage in *all* quarters, and publicly acknowledged it: and at the same time he pursued truth where it was kept dark by *any* individual, group or administration. His aim, in the *Weekly*, was to persuade by argument and the use of fact; if that did not work, then it would not occur to him to pick up a verbal club.

You never knew, as a journalist, the whole truth, he said in his interview and conversations with us: but you knew what you *believed* to be true and you knew when you were telling a lie. 'If you think something is wrong and unjust and cruel, you oppose it'.

But journalists — 'historians at a low level' — have another responsibility: to 'keep your mind open because . . . you might be in error. There's no point in freedom if you know the truth to start out with.' When judging events and individuals 'you have to have a sense of what is a real constraint, and what is an excuse. You also have to have some compassion for history.'

These are the best of texts with which to start again. It is also the best of times — as a Conservative government and a Conservative strand of politics which has held political and intellectual authority for so long begins to crumble, and as the Left, divided as it is, revives in ideas and popularity.

In the swirl of events, issues and ideologies which is now loosened after a near decade of constriction, the *New Statesman* will be, for those who wish to understand and play their part in change, a necessary guide. And we will grow together. □

The dumb dog, the invisible elephant

THE HARD LEFT

OUR MAIN REPORT this week is a classic of the dog that did not bark kind. Labour's Left has, since the near miss of Tony Benn's attempt on the party's deputy leadership in 1981 and even more since the election debacle of 1983, declined to the point of near invisibility. Benn himself, in a generously long interview with the *New Statesman*, likened its circumstances in the last year or two to that of an elephant in Piccadilly Circus which, unaccountably, no one sees.

But that state of affairs will not last. A new umbrella grouping, Labour Left Liaison, held a relaunch of the left meeting in leafy bourgeois Hampstead late last month: the Campaign Group of hard Left MPs is confident of a wave of new recruits in the new intake a post-election Parliament is bound to see: and the Labour leadership's evident need to capture and hold the centre of politics opens a vacuum on the Left which will not remain long vacant.

As we report, the hard Left will have problems regaining anything like the dominance it had in the heady years between 1979 and 1981. It is sectarian, suspicious and small: some of the Campaign Group, such as Michael Meacher, Clare Short, Margaret Beckett and Stuart Holland, are now infrequent firebrands in any anti-leadership cause, corralled as they are by front bench responsibilities and their own ambitions. The soft Left, grumble though it does about Neil Kinnock's putative imprisonment by 'the right', is for the moment more sore about the naked hatred it meets to its left than fearful of the warm embrace of the centre. For these and other reasons, the hard Left is now being written off as a collection of extinct volcanoes. But it is premature to do so: there is energy and will there still, as well as centres of organisational strength. Nothing is forever in politics: the elephant might lumber into visibility once more. □

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WHAT HAPPENED TO LABOUR'S LEFT?

Hampstead Town Hall, 22 July; another sweaty huddle of sectarians or an historic relaunch of Labour's Left? SARAH BENTON traces the wheeler dealings that bought the *groupuscles* together and despairs at their vision, stunted by a reluctance to reflect or to make real coalitions

THE NEWSPAPER SELLERS stretch from Hampstead Town Hall to Belsize Park tube station 200 yards down Haverstock Hill. Socialist Action, Socialist Worker ('Parasite Weds Scrounger' is its royal wedding splash), Militant, Workers Fight, The Next Step, The Leninist, Morning Star, Newsline. The freest and most aggressive of markets in the country, each one urging abolition of free markets.

Inside, a medium-sized hall is packed. Tony Benn wanders on to the platform and sits down, staring about him, open mouth giving a prematurely senile look. Margaret Beckett MP, Eric Heffer MP, Tony Mulherne of Liverpool Militant, Jeremy Corbyn MP. Finally, a speakers' table of more than a dozen.

Phil Turner, the constituency's (Hampstead and Highgate) Labour candidate, says there are many more like him ready to swell the Party's hard Left following the next election. Mandy Moore of the Women's Action Committee says the Labour Party leadership has a 'weird belief' in parliamentary party autonomy. Eric Heffer says that people in high places in the party believe it can win by stealth, and by attacking its left. Tony Benn says that the purpose of the meeting is for the left to

Stefano Cagnoni/Report

Right: Eric Heffer in Hampstead, attacking 'people in high places' in the party

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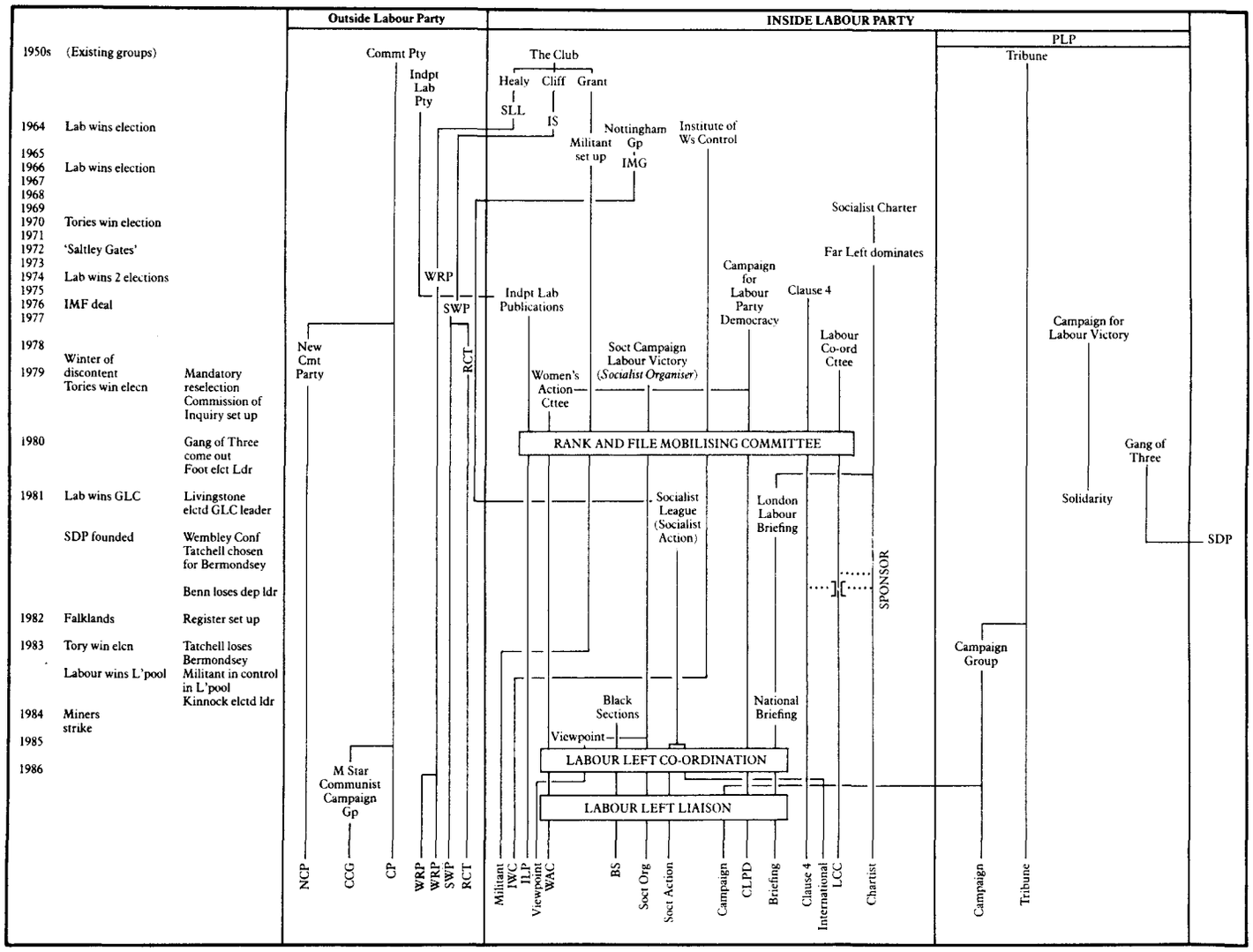

WRP = Workers' Revolutionary Party. SWP = Socialist Workers' Party. SLL = Socialist Labour League. IS = International Socialists. RCT = Revolutionary Communist Tendency. IMG = International Marxist Group. SDP = Social Democratic Party

work out its strategy. 'I don't think', he says, 'that we should be too worried by the shift to the right in the NEC and the PLP. Because all change has always come from the bottom and the people at the top have always been the last to get the message.'

It is 22 July, 1986. A few Fleet Street reporters, none of the 'heavyweights', file some copy. One freelance photographer takes some shots. Not a TV camera in sight: not surprising, since the next day is the royal wedding. The hard Left doesn't rate any more. If the media is right, it will just be another sweaty meeting of London's sectarians being talked at by yesterday's heroes in one of the capital's poshest parts. If wrong, it will be remembered by historians as the relaunch of Labour's Left.

IN UNVEILING this new construction of Labour's Left, the new pale the true Left has erected around itself went on show. Out are both Militant and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee through the door labelled 'fair weather friends'. But out too are Jo Richardson who has long enjoyed a home in the bosom of the Left and, most emphatically, out goes Ken Livingstone. Once the predicted new champion of the whole Left, he is now condemned for having betrayed the whole Left when he fixed a budget for the GLC.

In principle the hard Left believes in making alliances. The new hard Left's view of alliances is probably well expressed by Arthur Scargill in his speech to this year's NUM conference reprinted by *Campaign Group News*: we are all in favour of new alliances, he said, but 'only those alliances which agree on basic and fundamental goals'. Depending on who defines those basic and fundamental goals, the likelihood of the Labour Left actually making alliances, viz being ready to compromise for the greater good, seems very slight.

The exclusive nature of today's hard Left is a product of a series of defeats the Left has sustained since 1981 and an inability to compromise for the sake of some sort of broad left alliance. The first left grouping to fall victim to this process was the Tribune group in parliament. Unable to put their unanimous support behind Benn's bid for the deputy leadership in 1981, the uncompromising split off in November 1982 to form the Campaign Group. It claims the membership of 34 MPs and has recently moved outside the PLP to encourage the establishment of constituency Campaign groups, of which over 50 have been set up. However, in the view of one MP who is a member, only a handful of MPs are actually active in Campaign Group; the rest leave their names in the pool 'because for emotional reasons they want to be seen to be on the Left.'

It is part of the new aligment of the Left that today Campaign and Tribune cannot agree on a joint slate for the forthcoming Shadow Cabinet elections. Clare Short MP, who is a member of both groups and still enjoys credibility in the hard Left, has published a plea in *Tribune* for a joint slate but accepts that there is virtually no chance of getting one. Ken Livingstone has, too, wheeling in the criterion of public responsibility:

> With such desperately high stakes, the movement has a right to demand that the Tribune and Campaign Groups agree on a joint slate for the Shadow Cabinet as the first step towards much closer co-operation and even fusion in the near future.

LABOUR LEFT LIAISON went on show when it was less than two weeks old. It was born out of an earlier attempt to bring together the new hard Left. That was called Labour Left Co-ordination. But before LLC was set up in 1985, the first proposal that the Labour's hard Left regroup was made by Vladimir Derer in 1984. He was ignored. Derer is the secretary of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, a group he set up in 1973. An acknowledged sage on inner party matters, he was the guiding force for a broad Labour Left that briefly, between about 1978 and 1981, worked together to get constitutional change within the Labour Party. Between 1980 and 1981, most left groups, from Militant to Labour Co-ordinating Committee worked together in the Rank and File Mobilising Committee which Derer brought together.

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But January 1981 and the Wembley Conference, which ratified most of the constitutional changes, is now seen as having been the high point of the Left's energy and success. By 1982, Labour Conference had voted to introduce a Register of party organisations. In the furious row within the Left over what line to take (the Register was never in fact operated by the Labour Party) the CLPD fell out with most of its colleagues. Derer argued that as the Register was a conference decision, and accepting conference decisions was a matter of principle for the Left, they should in consequence accept the Register. Few agreed with him.

CLPD never regained its former authority and it is another sign of the times that the group which did first get the hard left Labour groups to liaise was Labour Briefing, in 1985. Today described by colleagues in LLL as 'a rump' and 'joining the loonies' Briefing once offered an open forum for the London Left. It came into existence after the Conservative election victory in 1979. It identified the London Labour Party as the new ground for the battle against Labour's old guard and local government as the front line against Thatcher. It provided the political base for Ken Livingstone — regarded then as a boring young man with an obsessional knowledge of inner party matters — to plan for Labour both to win the GLC and to wrest control from the old guard. Both of which were duly achieved in 1981.

Nonetheless Briefing's call for a new grouping was heeded, and last year it managed to get 16 groups to put their names, as members or observers, to the new Labour Left Co-ordination. Many of them were tiny; some like Target Labour Government, existed for no longer than a tactical flicker in someone's eye. LLC did set up a grouping and a paper called *'Witch Hunt News'*. Despite its name, this was less an organised defence of Militant, which is deeply unpopular with Labour's Left, than a rallying cry against the party's shift to the right and consequent persecution of the left. For Mandy Moore, 'in my wilder moments,' the Labour Party can appear like 'a police state'.

Labour Left Co-ordination did not last long. Its meetings rapidly degenerated into, in the words of Black Sections' Marc Wadsworth, 'a sectarian mire'.

The final meeting of LLC was on 31 May this year. Until then, both WAC and Black Sections say they watched from a distance rather than participated. 'We let them play their games in the nursery' says Paul Sharma of Black Sections. It was clear the LLC could not continue to drag out this miserable existence.

The tactical answer to their problems was provided by CLPD and Socialist Action (the International Marxist Group members who came into the Labour Party in the early '80s when IMG dissolved itself) who proposed a new structure which both clarified what representation groups were entitled to and, the *coup de grace*, proposed that the chair be shared by WAC and Black Sections. Lined up against them were Briefing, Viewpoint (a breakaway from Socialist Organiser) and International (a breakaway from Socialist Action.)

Sharma, the Black Sections' representative on the day, says that he had not decided who to support. When it came to it, he says he stood up and denounced the scrapping over 'the words of a dead, white middle class man' (understood to be a reference to Trostsky) and, on the grounds that Black Sections were cynically involved for what they could get out of it, would thus support the CLPD/Socialist Action proposal. At that, the LLC was terminated. Ten minutes later most of the groups reconvened in someone's flat to produce Labour Left Liaison. It held its first formal meeting on 9 June.

LABOUR LEFT LIAISON was thus formed without discussion among the constituent bodies which supposedly founded it. More importantly, it has been formed without any clear commitment so far to agreed political principles and certainly without any formulation of a political strategy either for the Labour Party as a whole or for this particular Labour Left.

The factor X which allowed LLL to get off the ground was the new weighting given to WAC and Black Sections. (We were, says Sharma disarmingly, 'in vogue' that month.) It is this factor which may turn out to be the most significant in the long run. At the best, it does feed new ideas and new people into a Left which is condemned as stale, old-fashioned and sectarian. At the worst, it has meant that no group on the Left (conscious of being white middle-class males) has been able to claim to speak on behalf of everyone — the prequisite for devising straegies and principles for a party as a whole. Whatever tactical victories may be won, it is no recipe for Left 'hegemony' within the party. Cynical tactical alliances take precedence over those aspired – to alliances for 'fundamental goals and principles.'

Heroes and victims

Tactics came to the fore because the Hard Left groups could not agree with each other. The setting up of LLL has at least 'achieved a truce' says Mandy Moore. It has partly done so by giving each group within it the right of veto over persons nominated to go on joint slates for Labour Party office. It has produced some odd heroes and victims. The Campaign Group's NEC slate (drawn up before LLL got going) includes the stalwart four everyone agrees on: Tony Benn, Joan Maynard, Dennis Skinner and Eric Heffer. The record of the last three on women and Blacks, let alone Lesbian and Gay Rights, is not usually regarded as exemplary. It also includes Gavin Strang for Treasurer, thus excluding Ken Livingstone.

However, WAC has vetoed Tam Dalyell, part of the Campaign Group slate, and Black Sections have vetoed Jo Richardson unless, in a private meeting later this month, they can finally persuade her to abandon her position as chair of the official Black and Asian Advisory Committee. How far LLL has support in the constituencies and in the trade unions — which it has made no apparent effort to involve — will be tested by the success of the slate they eventually come up with.

Apart from slates, what else has LLL done? It has, says Marc Wadsworth, had 'a very successful amendments campaign'. It has also thrown its weight behind the campaign against the expulsions of Kevin Scally and Amir Khan. Other than that, unity has been created by the 'shift to the right'. That has provided the needed enemy in common — and the beleaguered mood. In the definition of Briefing's Graham Bash, Kinnock, LCC et al are right-wing because 'they are class collaborationist and attacking trade unions, yet the hard Left has come up with no strategy for socialism that will both win popular support and avoid 'class Collaborationism'. Nor does the hard Left — outside Militant — have any record of work with trade unions or other working-class organisations. What matters is less the production of creative policies for a class than a prepared retreat into the politics of permanent opposition.

Tactic of destruction

Ask representatives of LLL what they hope to achieve and none speak with any ambition for it. The simple perspective is that they expect Labour to win the next election (nothing else bears thinking about, and it's not thought about) and, in a relatively short time, to mess up the business of 'successful' government. At which point the Left should, having organised itself to survive, be able to re-emerge with a neat critique of what went wrong (i.e. a failure to implement socialist policies).

This view comes out of a new Hard Left consensus that it has been successively defeated since 1981. Derer attributes this to poor tactics. The Left, especially the Campaign Group, 'overplayed its hand', he says, in 1982. He now feels vindicated for the 'softly softly' position CLPD took at the time. Graham Bash succinctly enunciates the three occasions of the Left's defeat: the loss of the deputy leadership by Benn in October 1981, the loss by Labour of the general election in 1983 — a defeat for the Left in particular because of the radical manifesto — and the defeat of the miners' strike in 1985. That was the most crushing because it strengthened the hand of a Right that insisted mass action could not bring about socialism.

In this list, three more key events are left out. The first is the defection of the SDP, the import of which has never been recognised or even discussed by the hard Left. The second is the defeat of Peter Tatchell in the Bermondsey by-election in February 1983. And the third is the failure of Labour councils to 'win' the campaign against rate-capping in the summer of 1985.

To go back to the beginning: there is consensus that until Wembley in January 1981 the Left was in an unparalleled upswing. Three months later the SDP was formed. That heralded a period of unparalleled attack on the Left as mad marxists who would, almost inevitably, destroy the Labour Party. Neither the Labour Party nor the Left in a general sense had ever experienced such popular dislike.

By the time Peter Tatchell was chosen as candidate for Bermondsey, one of the first of the new left to become a Labour parliamentary candidate, the press *and* public were interested in only one theme: would doddery old Michael

Cont'd on p.20

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TONY BENN NOT 'ONE OF US'

Tony Benn expects to ride to power on a new wave of radicalism. JOHN LLOYD talked to him

AS HE ROSE he was looked on kindly, if sometimes condescendingly, by his elders: nearing his goal, they become more alarmed, puzzled at first then irritable: as he almost grasped it, they become venomous.

For the Richard Crossman of the backbench years (to 1964), (Wedgewood) Benn is bright, interesting, 'one of us' socially and culturally, willing to fall in with Crossman's wheeze, in 1960, to construct a middle position between unilateralists and multilateralists. For Anthony Crosland, the party's great revisionist, Benn — whom he taught at Oxford — was nicknamed 'Jimmy' with affection tinged with amusement. Susan Crosland, in her lovely biography of her late husband, says Benn, who remained close to Crosland, would often drop round on a Sunday afternoon when the Croslands were accustomed to retiring to bed; he would ring the Croslands and mimic irritable constituents. Crosland would tease and insult him in private: but 'anyone who indiscriminately attacked Benn was told: "Won't hear a word said against him. I'm devoted to Tony Benn. Nothing the matter with him except he's a bit cracked".'

Barbara Castle, in her early (1974-76) Cabinet diaries, watches him 'bubble with euphoria' in the pre-'74 election period over his burgeoning support from the Left, and notes sourly: 'he seems to have appointed himself a one-man Popular Front.'

She records (28 November 1974) his topping the poll for a place on the national executive, beating — for the first time — Michael Foot, fading beacon of the Left even then. (Castle notes throughout that the two men's relationship is straining, Foot grumbling to Castle over Benn's attitudinising.) 'As the cheers greeted this, Harold (Wilson) turned and drawled at me: "He is becoming quite a young hero and I think it is a pity." His ambition is in both our minds.'

Foot, in his essay on 'Brother Tony' in *Loyalists and Loners*, shows no remnants of affection. He writes: 'Tony Benn . . . could belittle democracy itself and reduce the affairs of the Labour Party to the politics of the kindergarten'. As for Neil Kinnock, he has not yet published on Benn, but he simply hates him.

BENN HAS HAD to endure more than this: more than the extraordinary barrage of abuse

from the right-wing press in the '70s and early 1980s (it came down to reporters grubbing through his trash). He has, in his most recent period, had to endure being ignored.

In the course of a two-hour interview, Benn did — uncharacteristically — betray a brief sense of isolation, when he remarked that, after his only-just unsuccessful bid for deputy leadership in 1981, 'a lot of fair weather friends sloped off.'

So what's left — a shattered, disillusioned, lonely man? Hardly. He still looks and sounds younger than his 61 years. The famous charm is there, spiced by acerbic sallies that the *New Statesman* was, like the national press, more interested in politicians than politics. His gracious Holland Park town house would cause a spasm of horror in any Yuppie breast — run-down, shabby, stuffed with mementoes and markers, like the bust of Mao (an inspiration, because he was 'both a teacher and a learner' and a blazing banner presented to 'the Right Honourable Anthony Wedgewood Benn' by Arthur Scargill and other Yorkshire miners' leaders in 1974.

All of a piece

Benn once remarked that his home was like a Labour general management committee. Most leading Labour politicians would regard that description as a kind of hell: their homes are a refuge from precisely the kind of febrile activism that a GMC presents. Not him: his life, work and writing appear to have become fused over the past decade and a half in a way which appears to leave no room for a 'private life', or for the kind of irony other politicians bring to bear on their public personae. He seems all of a piece: what had been a famous and treasured sense of fun hardly pokes out, in public show. He has deserted the upper-progressive-intellectual stratum into which he was born and for which he was educated where wit, irony and detachment are favoured, for the class-war ironclad proletarian demeanour of Eric Heffer, Joan Maynard, Dennis Skinner, and for the suspicious, unforgiving utopianism of the far Left grouplets. Yet no one can wholly remould a character: for all his disregard for bourgeois style, a flattening of his fine and cultured voice, his massive mugs of tea, he is not 'one of us', for them.

But he has never, probably will now never, betray them. Quoting another model, Churchill, he recommends 'in defeat, defiance: in victory, magnanimity'. He now plays down the importance of constitutional reform ('I don't want an electoralism within an electoralism') in favour of a grand démarche on the national stage. He says he has favoured the relative obscurity in which the far Left has been plunged: but in the space 'between Hattersley and Hatton' a resurgent left has been regrouping. It is, he says, like an unnoticed 'elephant in Piccadilly Circus' whose 'presence will be noticed at the appropriate time'.

His address to the nation is of the broadest character. He believes the old structures are ossified and in decline: that (a constant theme) the establishment, including in it the leadership of his own party, is 'huddling together' against the rising clamour for change; that new waves are sweeping through the world, linking radical christians and Marxists. He sees an aggressive imperialism in the US and an ever-wider opening in the USSR: strong argument, for a 'non-aligned socialist foreign policy'.

There is an almost saintly side to his public character which must annoy the hell out of his fellow Labour parliamentarians: he says 'they can't bribe me, they can't buy me'. He has renounced all, and therefore found all: he embodies an idea whose time will come, and is indestructible. Again and again, in the interview, he returns to a theme of historical cycles: of themes — like public ownership, 'freedom for Ireland', accountability of leadership, betrayal of socialism by the Right — which appear first as tragedies, then again as endlessly repeated farces.

And in the historical cycles, his family looms very large. On a table in his study, his grandfather's election literature is laid out. John Benn won Stepney in 1892, as a Liberal, on a programme (as set out in a handbill) of 'The Big Loaf/Lower Taxes/The rights of trade unionists/Justice for Ireland/Reform and prosperity of the Port of London' — this last, says his grandson, a call for a public ownership. No question, the parallels can be made.

But do they dictate inevitable radicalisation from below? Can the aspirations of a radical liberal in the midst of Britain's imperial glory be equated with demands made by his grandson of a society which he sees as structurally archaic?

His politics deserve study

Put that way, the answers seem to come out, no. They may, however, be beside the point: Benn may be doing no more than drawing on a well of comfort and energy in order to — as he anticipates — again ride a wave of radicalism. Yet even if he were never again to achieve the eminence he held in the Party and the country in his great decade, Benn's politics, perhaps indissoluble from his protean personality, will deserve study. His critique of Party and national constitution; of the press; of the conservatism of *all* establishments; his faith in the ability of the 'base' can sound grand as often as it can sound 'a bit cracked'.

Neil Kinnock has every right to hate him: when he stood on the stage of the *Tribune* Rally in Brighton in October 1981 after refusing to vote for Benn as deputy leader, he was showered with 'Judas' coins by Benn's supporters. But his former followers, the 'fair weather friends' who now murmur how cracked he is — without Crosland's affection or ability to say it to his face — these are the ones who should examine their political conscience at least: for *he* has not changed. Bennism remains what it has been for 15 years. And if Kinnock's massive effort to rush the Labour Party into power on a reformist ticket fails — it might walk abroad again. □

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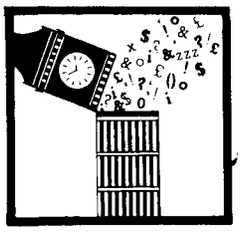

Why the Alliance must present the challenge of coalition to Labour

FIVE YEARS AGO social democrats had a clear strategy — at least those of us who'd just left Labour thought we had.

Our objective was to supplant Labour as the natural governing alternative to the Tories. After Warrington it seemed within our grasp. Labour would gradually be pushed to the margins, perhaps initially retaining 25-30 per cent of the vote, but like the French Communists slowly fade into oblivion — an historic relic of the class war era, as society had moved on.

On this the Gang of Four were united. David Owen was typically the most forceful, insisting that the new SDP should seek affiliation to the Socialist International. Roy Jenkins was more cautious about taking aboard unnecessary ideological baggage. He cast our objectives in terms of a psephological formula: for every decent-minded Tory won over, we should take two former Labour votes.

Five years later, despite the SDP's success in putting down firm roots, the achievement of that one-time central objective has stalled badly. As Alliance candidate in Fulham, I witnessed a Labour recovery among its traditional working-class support. It may be fragile, as the Newcastle result showed. It certainly is insufficient, given Labour's failure to break the 40 per cent poll barrier now, to elect a majority Labour government. But any seasoned campaigner on the council estates knows some recovery is there.

David Owen's tactical brilliance has so far saved the SDP from facing up to this reality. His voracious mastery of Departmental briefs, his superhuman stamina in dashing from the Commons to speaking engagement to television studio has sustained a grudgingly-granted profile.

But a clear long-term strategy no longer underpins the day-to-day performance. For a party that prides itself on its commitment to open government, there is a curious reluctance to discuss openly where we go now, even among those privileged to share its inner counsels. Small surprise that conspiracy theories grow rife and Hugo Young (*Guardian* 24 July) can write — wrongly in my opinion — that David Owen is contemplating a post-election deal between the SDP, Conservatives and Unionists.

Maybe the truth is that David Owen's strategy is not to have one: to keep options open; to maximise Alliance votes wherever they can be won; to seize the main chance in a 'hung' Parliament for forcing through PR.

That may satisfy some. It does not satisfy me.

First, it is uncomfortably rootless. It offers endless temptations, usually spurned, to jump on any bandwagon momentarily rolling by. Toying with propositions to support compulsory national service, student loans or advertising on the BBC may or may not be good politics — it has precious little to do with social democracy.

Second, 'the eye for the main chance' approach may well weaken our position in a 'hung' Parliament. We have got to demonstrate a coherent political strategy and philosophy of which electoral reform is an integral part. If we give the appearance of making PR only a bargaining objective, we run a grave risk of looking like wheeler-dealers, spoilers and opportunists, whose only principle is power.

I JOINED the SDP as a social democrat desperate for a credible alternative to this

ROGER LIDDLE

dreadful government. Bill Rodgers allayed my uncertainties with a simple argument. Either the SDP would enjoy sweeping success, or the shock of its creation would restore Labour as an electorally attractive social democratic party.

For my part there is no doubt. The Alliance must first present the challenge of coalition to Labour. Then Labour friends will tell me it's not on. 'We don't need you, because we're going to win outright. If we don't win outright, we'll split the Alliance and win over some radical Liberals. The SDP's moved far too far to the Right for us.'

These arguments are conventional in terms of avoiding internal splits. But they are complacent also. They ignore the adverse electoral arithmetic for an outright Labour victory, even in a second election; the unshakeable commitment of David Steel and fellow Liberals to the Alliance; and the emerging common ground on policy (e.g. Labour's, albeit hesitant, acceptance of union ballots and council house sales; their abandonment of heavy-handed economic planning and Morrisonian nationalisation).

Labour's social democrats will have to fight, if a Centre-Left government is ever going to be possible. But when it comes to the point of securing agreement to a coalition, the trade union block votes will fall behind a referendum on PR (as they did on Europe) rather than see the Tories continue in office.

SDP policies have not 'moved to the Right'. Rather they have sought to redefine Croslandite social democracy in the light of its failings in the 1960s and '70s. The SDP is *for* public spending as the principal means of reducing inequalities and *against* tax cuts. But increased public expenditure should be directed in future at enabling individuals to enjoy wider life chances, not on centralised public provision, dominated by producer group interests.

The SDP is committed to a mixed economy with an active role for the State. But we no longer blush with embarrassment at the mention of markets, profits and competition. Once that particular inhibition is overcome, social democrats can develop a much stronger sense of where market failure needs correction.

The SDP is rooted in the old Labour theme of partnership. But we recognise the need to harness the energies of progressive management as well as strong democratic trade unions and listen to the cries of the unorganised.

NOT ALL PAST weaknesses have yet been fully addressed. A Centre-Left government could well founder on the rocks of a pay explosion or over-optimistic spending plans. An Alliance challenge to Labour's willingness to co-operate should highlight these problems, not fudge them.

But there is one area where compromise is essential, though its achievement will be fraught. Every reformist coalition in twentieth-century British politics could have torn itself apart on defence. It frequently has done so. The Liberals split on the Boer War, then conscription. Labour split on collective security in the 1930s, German rearmament and the H-bomb in the 1950s and '60s. Defence played a big part in my decision to join the SDP.

For an effective government to be possible, Labour must move. The SDP could never support any policy that threatened the essential interests of NATO. But it is equally incumbent on us not to erect unnecessary totem poles which, if they are allowed to stand higher than anything else in our faith, must inevitably rule out co-operation with the Left and leave us with no option but coalition with the Right.

Maintenance of a British independent deterrent at all costs is such a totem. David Owen owes it to social democracy to remember that. □

Roger Liddle was the Alliance candidate for Fulham in April 1986. He is a member of the SDP national executive.
Peter Kellner is on holiday.

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MEDIA

Rude, overbearing and lazy: the Buckpalace press corps

PHILLIP KNIGHTLEY

THE SUNDAY TIMES-Buckingham Palace bout fizzled out and has been replaced by the race to get a peek at the Queen's ECG. This is a pity. Just when it looked as if we might have learnt what was really said in those telephone calls between Simon Freeman, the *Sunday Times* crack investigative reporter, and Michael Shea, the Queen's press officer, Buckingham Palace has backed down. A letter to *The Times* is no substitute for what the Palace should have done. If it felt that Freeman, and his editor, Andrew Neil, had stitched up poor Mr Shea, then why did not the Palace complain to the Press Council?

What a fascinating case that would have been. Having worked with Freeman I find it inconceivable that he would not have tape-recorded the vital conversations, the ones in which the *Sunday Times* swears that Shea revealed the Queen's innermost views on Mrs Thatcher, and in which Buckingham Palace swears that he did no such thing. The Press Council could have called on Neil to produce the recordings and then have drawn nasty conclusions if he failed to do so.

But that is not to be. Freeman and Neil have blown their chances of an OBE apiece (for services to journalism) and we are left wondering why the Palace was so reluctant to take the matter further. Could it be that behind the bluster and the outrage, the Queen's advisers are only too aware that the Royals need Fleet Street as much as Fleet Street needs the Royals? And that a kick in the shins from the *Sunday Times*, no matter how painful for Shea, must not be allowed to interrupt one of the cosiest little deals in the history of journalism?

The unwritten arrangement between Fleet Street and Buckpalace makes the rightly-criticised Parliamentary lobby system look like the old *Sunday Times* Insight team at its most deadly. At least with the lobby system some genuine news does occasionally trickle out of the urinal even if the reader is never allowed to know who has done the leaking or why. The last major piece of real revelation Fleet Street produced about the British Royal Family was the abdication of Edward VIII and that only after the late Sunder Kabadi first broke the news in India. Instead Fleet Street's Buckpalace correspondents treat us to the most mind-numbing trivia about the Royals' personal tastes, love life, health and eccentricities. The Queen cannot even have her heart checked, which for anyone else her age would be considered a fairly normal precaution, without Fleet Street turning it into a Constitutional crisis. It is all part of the sort of permanent prying that would merit a Royal toe up the seat of the pants — if the Royals really cared.

But they have to keep their part of the bargain with Fleet Street, which is this: We will tolerate whatever rot you write about us; we will let you stick your inky nose into our private lives; we will smile for your cameras; chat with your writers and lunch with your editors. In return you will never write seriously about Royalty; you will never query its existence, examine its performance, or look too closely at how it functions.

There is no better occasion to see this deal in action than during a Royal Tour abroad. A Royal Tour is what Buckpalace correspondents live for; engagements, marriages, pregnancies and Royal functions at home fill in time; a Buckpalace correspondent comes to life on tour. A tour has everything: exotic foreign climes, lavish expenses, parties, receptions, banquets, a chance actually to shake hands with the Royals — every tour includes at least one Royal party for the press — and, since travelling in the entourage means some of the adulation rubs off, a vicarious Royal thrill.

The behaviour of the Buckpalace correspondents as a group on one of these tours has to be seen to be believed. They are rude and overbearing with local journalists. They complain vociferously to local officials if the slightest hitch occurs in their arrangements. And they employ a method of working that is the very antithesis of good journalism.

SCENE: Alice Springs airport, Central Australia, March 1983. Charles and Diana have landed from London, met some locals, and have now driven off to their motel. The Buckpalace correspondents pile into a bus that will take them to the press centre to file their copy. The doyen of the corps, James Whitaker of the *Daily Mirror*, takes charge.

'All right then. Can we agree on what she was wearing?' (The lady correspondents refer to notes and handouts and fire off some technical stuff about Diana's clothing.) 'Good. Now can we agree on what Charles said?' (An agreement of sorts is reached on Charles's quotes.) 'And what did she say to that kid?' Quickly and efficiently — suggesting that this was not the first time such an event had occurred — a consensus report was developed. This is why if you were to read every single British newspaper during a Royal Tour — though God knows why anyone would bother — you would discover that all the reports are basically the same. Not for the Buckpalace correspondent the wonderful eccentricity that Patrick O'Donovan brought to the one or two Royal tours that he covered for the *Observer*. Today's Royal Tour correspondent sees through collective eyes.

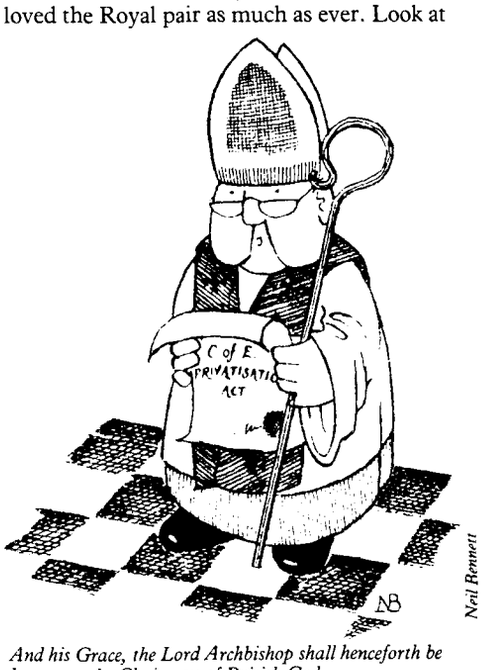
The only genuine rivalry that still exists is between photographers; one of the few worthwhile moments on a Royal Tour is to see them elbowing and kicking each other for an advantageous spot. And if you are going to accept that the Royals are fair game, then why not pry with a bit of photographers' flair. I recall the Australian freelance, Maurie Wilmott, who was offered a fortune by some Italian magazine to get a photograph of four (or was it five) pregnant Royals at a family gathering.

Wilmott hired a caravan and camped out in Scotland, biding his time. He nearly made it. The Royal detectives caught him disguised as a trout fisherman, casting his way down the bank towards the Royals, rod in one hand and a fishing basket full of Nikons and long lenses over his shoulder. As he was led away, Charles, who had a hard time from Wilmott that summer at Cowes, was heard to shout 'Buzz off, Wilmott!', the only time he has been known to use a four-letter word.

Photographers are a different breed. There is no excuse for the anodyne stuff the Buckpalace journalists dish out. But what could they report if they were not bound by the unwritten agreement? Perhaps the Royals are not worth reporting at all. But it did occur to me, as much against my wishes I covered selections of the Royal Tour mentioned above, that no correspondent ever tries to assess the Royals' performance and the audience reaction. When did you last see a headline that read, ROYAL TOUR FLOP. CHARLES FAILS TO FIND FORM?

I tried out the idea on a BBC Royal Tour correspondent. I put it to her that perhaps one of the reasons the Royals were making more frequent tours of Australia was an attempt by Buckpalace to stem rising republican sentiment there. As far as I could make out, it was not succeeding. In fact Australians were getting a bit bored of seeing so many Royals so often and were finding it hard to raise the energy to get to the top of the street to see Charles and Di drive past. 'In short,' I said, 'I think this tour's a bit of a washout.'

She was horrified. No, she said. Australians loved the Royal pair as much as ever. Look at



Neil Bennett

And his Grace, the Lord Archbishop shall henceforth be known as the Chairman of British God

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the crowd that turned out to see them at every public function. This raised the possibility of another story. How does Buckpalace know for certain that anyone will turn out at all? A moderate amount of investigation revealed what an efficient, cunning lot of planners the Queen has working for her.

ANY ROYAL COUPLE touring abroad is always assured of a minimum crowd because Buckpalace arranges with the local education authorities for schools to have a public holiday to attend the Royal welcome. Human nature being what it is, at least a few thousand Mums will come along as well to watch Johnny and Sheila watching the Royal couple. And then a crowd draws a crowd. Simple show business principles seldom fail.

But even Buckpalace planners sometimes get it wrong. Instead of the usual Royal ball to round off a Royal visit, Buckpalace planned something different for Charles and Di in Sydney. The ball was a charity one, and anyone who could afford £50 a ticket was welcome, Aussie egalitarianism at its best. The result was that instead of meeting typical Australians, the Royal couple were surrounded by public relations officers, media managers and account executives, who are as gross in Australia as they are in Britain.

I put all this together in a story which, you will have to admit, was at least a bit different from all the other mush you were reading about the tour at the time. The *Sunday Times*, even in those pre-Neil days, was not pleased. The very fact that it was different from what the other correspondents were writing cast suspicion on the report. 'If it's true', I was told, 'why hasn't someone else written it?' This was proof, if I needed it, of the dictum of some Fleet Street editors — news is not news until someone else reports it. In the end a truncated version appeared but without the sting. Of course, the Buckpalace corps to man then denied that the tour was a flop or that republicanism was making any difference to the Royals' popularity.

But why can't Buckpalace be reported for what it really is: a very successful British business, Royals (GB) Co Ltd. Even the Queen, I am told by sources in day-to-day contact with Her Majesty and to whom I have read back both words, occasionally refers to her family as 'the Firm'.

Then the Buckpalace press corps would have to do some real work: who is the most efficient executive? Is it a good idea for Charles to write his own speeches? Who was censured at the last board meeting? Who's working on long-term strategy? What is it? How does the managing director see the firm in the year 2000?

I have a suggestion to make for the first step towards this transformation. Michael Shea has got to go. He should change places with Bernard Ingham at No. 10. The Buckpalace correspondents could do with a thousand cuts from the sharp edge of Ingham's tongue. And Shea's soft and gentlemanly manner might work wonders on Mrs Thatcher's uncaring image. □

This is the first of a new-style expanded media column which will go behind the way the news is made and brought to you. **Next week**: Donald MacIntyre.

SOUL ON SUNDAY

NEW SUNDAY SCRAPES IN

'If it's not different, it's not worth it', says John Pilger of *News on Sunday*. IAN WILLIAMS on *NoS*'s nail-biting week

ON WEDNESDAY *News on Sunday* just scraped in with its £6½ million share flotation. Only hours before the deadline, they were coaxing the AUEW into helping plug the gap. 'A Left of Centre, radical paper, with high quality journalism explicity aimed at a working-class readership', it's trying to fill an obvious gap in Britain's press. But the gap is a black hole which has swallowed up many other worthy attempts.

The lack of union response to Lord McCarthy's 1983 TUC study on starting a Labour paper has left 'this great movement of ours' reliant upon the proprietorial eccentricities of Robert Maxwell for Fleet Street support, at a time when journalistic standards are plummeting in the face of a new generation of press barons.

Former labour papers foundered because of financial problems, although the *Herald*, half owned by the TUC, also had to keep the four general secretaries on its board happy with the content. Ditched by the TUC in 1964, it was relaunched as the *Sun* but suffered from trying to maintain high standards of journalism with low rates of advertising, until Murdoch 'rescued' it in 1969. The rest, as they say, is history — but not, often, journalism.

Advertising was a similar problem for *Reynolds News* adopted by the Co-op in 1929, and renamed the *Sunday Citizen* in 1965. The Co-ops were collectively bankrolling its 350,000 circulation with a quarter of a million pounds a year until they closed it in 1967.

In both cases, the newspapers were aimed at a working-class readership which didn't have the spending power to attract advertisers. Even now the tabloids recover only a third of their costs from advertisers — as opposed to two thirds for the qualities designed for upmarket disposable incomes.

Aimed at the *Herald*'s slot, *News on Sunday* hopes that the different conditions for Sunday newspapers will avert the *Herald*'s fate. Occasionally described as a left *Mail on Sunday*, it provokes financial as well as political comparisons. The *Mail*'s estimated £20 million launch costs still haven't guaranteed its success; and the total of the *News*'s finance is only half that, even with its promised credit facilities of around £3m.

Nicholas Horsley, head of the giant Northern Foods, is a 'radical liberal' who accepted chairmanship of *News on Sunday* because he was impressed by market research showing a demand of between 800,000 and 1,500,000 for a 'slightly down-market, left of centre Sunday'. While others have claimed an increase in spending power, and hence advertising potential, in the target readership, he's more sanguine, and sees the answer in mass circulation with over 700,000 as break-even target. In reply to allegations of under-capitalisation, he points out that the contract with the *Telegraph* to print, and the NGA/NUJ direct input agreement, reduced starting costs considerably. Above all, he claims the paper will have 'soul', in contrast to the blandness of *Today*.

However, Northern Foods didn't subscribe to the share issue. 'We're in the food business, not publishing', he says. 'Personally, I won't be investing,' said Clive Thornton, who left *NoS* after disagreements over whether Murdoch's offer of his old premises was a Trojan or a Gift Horse. But his major disagreement was about timing. 'We were running a business, not a movement', he says, complaining about the collective consensus approach which he thinks delayed the project. 'There is a gap there for a *Daily Mirror*-style paper on a Sunday, but *Today* and even the *Mail on Sunday* have been moving into it. Delay hasn't improved the prospects.'

Surveys showed that the readership wanted a popular style rather than correct politics. Indeed, any hint of official labour movement sponsorship provoked adverse reaction, even from those dissatisfied with Fleet Street bias.

NEWS ON SUNDAY was thus designed to be a commercial proposition which would attract institutional finance, not a worthy but dull left tract. To reconcile sound politics with sound finance, a Founders Trust will have effective veto over major decisions and over anyone with 15 per cent of the shares.

In fact, commercial share bids have been minimal, with few financiers prepared to take a financial risk on a politically unsavoury investment. Rothschilds, for example, advised pension funds against investing, so the share bids came from politically sympathetic bodies with £3.5 million from local government pension funds — mostly of London boroughs. The unions were collectively disappointing, but the T&GWU (£500,000), NALGO (£250,000) and the NUR (£150,000) are among prominent subscribers.

The Tory appointees on Greater Manchester's residuary body refused an expected £250,000 investment last Friday, and the lack of finance raised from Manchester-based institutions — including the Co-ops — has cast doubt upon the paper's first declared intent to have its centre of gravity there. But Manchester City Council, in conjunction with the EEC, has offered a £500,000 regional training grant for the 160 staff expected to work in Manchester.

The regional groups are one of the differences. There are plans for regional inserts into the paper from between six to ten areas. Pilots in Merseyside and South Yorkshire indicated a possible sales increase of 50 per cent and 60 per cent respectively with the inserts, giving an increase on overall projected circulation of between 250-350,000.

There are still arguments over the role of the inserts, but time is running out. Target date for publication is next March, with the regional inserts following in six months. □

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THE SURVIVAL KIT FOR APARTHEID
BOERCLAYBANK
Published by the National Union of Students in conjunction with the Anti Apartheid Movement
Barclays own 40% of Barclays National, South Africa's largest bank, which controls 30% of the country's banking business.
NUS
FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM
BOYCOTT BARCLAYS

WHILE HOWE TALKS, *STUDENTS ACT*

- While our government has been stubbornly refusing to bow to international pressure over action against South Africa, British students have been imposing economic sanctions of their own – against a British company that is propping up apartheid, Barclays Bank.
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- Over the past two years Barclay's share of the lucrative student banking market has plummetted-from 27% to 17% and the bank admits the NUS campaign to be the major factor in this.
- Students have long realised the time for talking is over. Now is the time to act and join the fight for freedom.

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THE ETHICAL SECTOR

Montage: Leon Kuhn

BORROWING REQUIREMENT

Tired of investing in tax-subsidised housing for the richer 56 per cent of the population (i.e. building societies)? JOHN RENTOUL tells how to weed out the fallen from the elect of other investments, and recommends the least worst bank to put the rest in

PETER WEBSTER wears plastic shoes. He's a vegetarian, doesn't smoke, drink, or buy Chilean fruit. He admits to occasional lapses eating Wispas — 'Cadbury's are one of the few companies who pay all their South African workers above European Community code levels' — but he's definitely not a Smartie person (beware Rowntree Mackintosh in chocolate clothing). He's the executive secretary of EIRIS, Ethical Investments Research and Information Service.

For those looking for ethical stocks and shares, EIRIS is the first stop. It supplies factsheets on some 500 major companies, can prepare a report on customers' current shareholdings, and a list of 'acceptable' companies according to a range of criteria chosen by the client:

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EIRIS hopes to add to the list soon, with environmental issues, animal testing, employment policies, social responsibility and information disclosure.

The service costs from £35 a year. Possibly

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of more interest to *NS* readers is the subscription to the *Ethical and Social Investment* newsletter, £2 a year, which provides useful brickbats for throwing at your pension fund or trade union's investment policy.

Big companies whose shares are quoted on the Stock Exchange tend to have too many interests for the investor to keep track of. EIRPIS is one solution. Another is to invest in small British unquoted companies. This is more risky, but the tax subsidy of the Business Expansion Scheme may make it worth investing some of your money if you're prepared to tie it up for five years (see Traidcraft box). The prospectus will tell you exactly what the company is doing and intends to do. Ask an accountancy firm or stockbroker for advice. Brokers who are know to avoid South African connections include Grieveson Grant and Hoare Govett. Like most of the City, they do so on grounds of expediency rather than morality — South Africa is judged a bad bet.

Unit trusts

Ethical screening of unit trusts, which spread investment across a large number of companies, has begun to get going in the UK. (In the US ethical investment is already a $50 billion business.) Apart from the Friends' Provident Stewardship Unit Trust (minimum investment £1,000) which has been going for two years, two new funds were launched last month. The Fellowship Trust, launched by stockbrokers Buckmaster and Moore, also has a minimum investment of £1,000 and will invest a significant amount abroad, in the US, Europe and Japan. The Ethical Investment Fund, like Stewardship using the EIRIS service, offers the tax avoidance, er, advantages, of an 'investment bond' (minimum £2,000). Take a tip from an expert:

Traidcraft, which imports food and tea that don't make profits out of poverty wages and makes recycled paper, has just made a share offer. You're not supposed to see it as a profit-making investment. 'Dividends will be low', says the prospectus in a parody of the usual blurb, 'a maximum of 6 per cent before tax, and the directors do not envisage a substantial appreciation in the share price'.

On the other hand, if you can afford to invest £506 (the minimum is £115) for at least five years, you should get tax relief under the Tories' Business Expansion Scheme. If you pay the standard rate, 29 per cent, you can claim £147 back from the Inland Revenue, which is a better return than you'll get in a building society (prospectus from Kingsway, Gateshead NE11 0NE). ●

'People can get carried away with moral questions. Once you start, there's no end to it. I would not work for an arms company. But there is no reason to pay more than the minimum amount of tax.' Who said that? Ron Plummer, one of the architects of the Rossminster tax avoidance business.

Pension funds or 'It's my money'

Even if the only stock you've held is an Oxo cube, if you're a member of a pension fund or have an insurance policy *your money* is invested in the stock market. The *NS* has yet to hear of an insurance company advertising its ethical investment policy. But for the moment, energies can be directed at your pension fund trustees. Their first response will probably be to tell you that they have to seek the highest possible return for fund members. You will then quote back at them the Megarry judgment against Arthur Scargill's argument that the miners' pension fund shouldn't invest abroad or in competing energy industries: 'The beneficiaries might well consider that it was far better to receive less than to receive more money from what they consider to be evil and tainted sources,' said Megarry. Scargill lost, but only on the grounds that his particular argument was 'too speculative and remote'. Odd man, Megarry.

Return to lender

So how much is this going to cost you? The City of London Polytechnic ran some imaginary portfolios through a computer, using EIRIS's advice to avoid South Africa, alcohol, tobacco, gambling and arms in different combinations. The worst loss, compared with a portfolio that wasn't restricted in this way, was 0.08 per cent in a year. Not a lot, in other words. In fact, the Stewardship Unit Trust has so far just out performed the stock market as a whole.

Transport and General Workers Union

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WHO TO BANK WITH

Best buys

1. **National Girobank** (unless you need an overdraft)
2. **Royal Bank of Scotland** (unless you want more than 320 branches South of the Border)
3. **Co-op Bank** (but it has only 84 branches and is known affectionately as the Hard-of-Hearing Bank)
4. **Trustee Savings Bank** (well, it doesn't make profits out of Third World debt)
5. **Lloyds** (the 'You Should See the Others' award for the most reluctantly recommended of the Big Four)

The National Girobank is — until it's privatised — a nationalised industry and its assets are invested in British government and local council stocks. The same applies to the TSB's assets, but you may well object to the way its managers have scrambled away from its northern working-class depositors towards horrid southern yuppies. Not to mention the £800 million bank error in its favour by the government in last year's TSB Act.

The Royal Bank of Scotland, which is a smaller independent clearing bank, is not knowingly involved in loans to South Africa. All the Big Four clearing banks lend money around the world, usually jointly in 'syndicates'. But Lloyds has not — as far as is known — been involved in loans to South Africa since 1983 and in the previous year took part in only $14 million of syndicated lending.

Nat West was involved in $809 million of South African loans mid-1982 to end-1984, Barclays (which also owns 40 per cent of South African Barclays National) in $725 million and Midland in $719 million (UN Centre Against Apartheid). All the same, Lloyds has just tried and failed to take over Standard Chartered, which is second only to Barclays in South Africa. And, with Midland, it is the largest South American lender, which includes money to Chile among others.

The National Girobank doesn't do a credit card (although it does provide a cash machine card shared with the Abbey National Building Society), but you don't have to have an account at Lloyds to get an Access card. Nor an account at the Co-op to get a Co-op Visa card, but this has the disadvantage of looking like a Barclaycard even though it has been administered separately since last year.

Options for the Ethical Student

Those who are confident they can do without an overdraft (on £1,901 a year there's scope for Matthew Parris to make a fool of himself here) can go for the National Girobank and a £5 cassette or record token for all new teenage customers.

For the rest, this year's bribes: Royal Bank of Scotland, Lloyds and Nat West offer £10 cash up front. Midland offers a National Express student coach card (worth £3.50) and a clock said to be worth £8 but it can be commuted for £6 cash. Barclays offers bribes for the first time — the ultimate in uncool, a fake filofax (allegedly worth £14), and a £7 bonus at the end of the first term. An internal Barclays Bank memo blames the National Union of Students 'Boycott Barclays' campaign for pushing Barclays from second place among new students in 1983 to fourth in 1985, and reluctantly concludes that it has to offer an incentive.

The TSB only offers discounts at Debenhams and Just-In shops.

The Co-op offers a £10 Co-op voucher to all 15-22 year-olds until the end of October. There are various possibilities. Diligent and extrovert anti-apartheid campaigners prepared to explain why they have a turquoise cheque book could open an account at Barclays and switch to Lloyds when they have collected their £7 loyalty bonus. The Lloyds £10 offer will still be open then, after which they can move on to the Co-op.

None of the clearing banks imposes charges on student overdrafts, usually only up to about £200, which are offered at special rates. Barclays is the most expensive, at 2.5 percentage points over base rate. The rest offer 1 point over base, currently 11.4 APR (Annual Percentage Rate), except Lloyds, whose concessionary rate is 1 per cent a month, or 12.6 APR. The TSB offers overdrafts up to £200 at 2 points over base rate. The National Girobank only offers personal loans (typical APR for £1,000 over three years 19.4, which is still much better than borrowing on Access or Visa credit cards). □

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Labour must be pushed to spend, spend, spend

WHEN THE CONSERVATIVES engage in scaremongering, it is sensible to assume they have something important to hide and wish to divert public attention away from it. At the moment they have little to boast about; even their one alleged success, the fall in the inflation rate, looks as if it may crumble in their hands. The general state of the world economy can give them little confidence. Sterling drifts down, and a large number of 'experts' predict continuing falls in stock markets.

Despite that, I, for one, welcome the emphasis being placed on public expenditure. It allows us to make clear how wasteful the present government has been. And it also causes us to concentrate our own minds on what we will actually do, rather than vaguely on what we would like to do. (I never miss an opportunity to remind our shadow ministers that a year from now they will be in power and have to make some real choices! That involves foregoing some things, while selecting others.)

Of course, there is so much to be done that there is no problem drawing up a shopping list, the cost of which is astronomical and could only be met in the very long run. In that sense Mr John Macgregor, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, is quite unimaginative in coming up with figures as low as he does! Everyone else, aware of the condition of Britain's education system, the health service, the physical environment of our cities, and the antiquated nature of the economic infrastructure, could easily justify expenditure on an altogether larger scale, if only we could afford it.

Our economic position remains parlous. North Sea oil revenues have been frittered away. Seven years of Tory rule have done little or nothing to raise our growth rate. There are strict limits, therefore, to what we can spend, until a new government gets things right.

There is an inevitable conflict of objectives, in particular concerning what is to be given first priority. We should not forget, therefore,

MAURICE PESTON

that the electorate expects that a political party, intending to be the next government, should have got most of that sorted out by now. Indeed, I thought we had. The main objective will be to minimise unemployment, especially by creating conditions in which the unemployed will find productive jobs. That in itself provides a criterion according to which all other decisions must be judged.

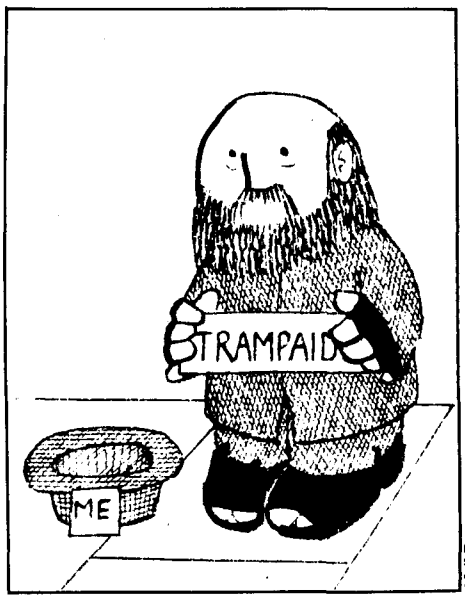
Obviously, it will be necessary to increase employment in the public sector, as well as to raise government expenditure on private sector output. In other words, we need both to recruit more nurses and to initiate a major construction programme in the cities. But having said that, our first criterion has to be employment creation; projects must then be assessed according to what they achieve in more explicitly welfare terms. (This is not to deny the proposition that the best welfare measure of all is the restoration of full employment.) Here I can only express a personal view. In the shorter term, regretfully, I would give more to the NHS than to education, and, within education, more to the schools than to the advanced and further sectors. But above all, I am convinced that failure to hold back the defence budget would in all circumstances be ludicrous.

AS FAR AS numbers are concerned, it must be emphasised that the present government's borrowing requirement when correctly measured is £12 billion. The Chancellor will cut taxes next year by £3 billion so that the borrowing requirement is scheduled to rise to £15 billion, anyway. A Labour Chancellor, being more interested in economic recovery, will over three years spend in excess of that, but hardly in a profligate manner. Instead of the tax cuts there will be an increase in public expenditure of some £2 billion each year for the next three years. In addition, it is to be hoped that there will be no backtracking on the redistributive package, under which social security benefits would rise by £3.5 billion by withdrawing earlier tax concessions to the very much better off. The overall effect would be to build up the PSBR to £18 billion. This is the smallest amount required to begin to deal with our existing economic problems, and errs very much on the side of caution. If policies for incomes, exchange rate, and capital repatriation have their expected degree of success, a lot more can be done subsequently.

All this leads on to the latest proposal—by the odd combination of Mr Macgregor and Mr Merlyn Rees — of an independent audit of the Labour Party's spending plans. It is difficult to see much in favour of this, but a lot against: apart from anything else, one must assume there is somewhere to be found a set of economists, accountants, and other alleged experts, who are so objective in their approach to affairs that they can truly be described as independent. (Set aside the logical puzzle of what independent group can guarantee the independence of this one.)

What would the audit cover? Presumably, it would apply to all political parties. Its first task, therefore, would be an assessment of what the government has actually done. Three immediate topics would be a comparison of the unemployment figures with a correct way of measuring unemployment, an estimate of the true extent of poverty, and the present and likely future position of the balance of trade in manufactures. Then if public expenditure is so important, one might suggest a study of the physical condition of our schools and colleges, the provision of textbooks and the state of libraries. And if that is not enough to keep these independent people going, they could do a cost-benefit analysis of fortress Falklands.

But the real *point is that the public expenditure debate as defined by Mr Macgregor is not serious,*



Neil Bennett

Professor Peston is Professor of Economics at Queen Mary College and an adviser to Labour in government and opposition.

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and it is foolish of the Labour Party to fight on the other side's ground. The economic issues are the government's failures which themselves follow from a doctrinaire approach to public expenditure. It is the Tory unwillingness to spend enough in the right places which is significant. Scare tactics on Labour's plans are an irrelevance. The point must be reiterated that the real danger is that Labour will spend too little, not too much.

Another example of misformulation of the problem that suits the government concerns the difference in response to takeovers and mergers, on the one hand, and nationalisation, on the other. In each case there is a transfer of ownership frequently financed by borrowing. Private sector takeovers are viewed benevolently, however, while the City, with all its 'objectivity', sees public sector takeovers as little short of disastrous. It may be argued that private sector takeovers lead to efficiency gains. It is worth remembering then that this flies in the face of the bulk of the evidence. This shows that takeovers and mergers do not yield real gains except to those financiers who organise them, and the initial shareholders in the firms taken over.

THIS LEADS ME to one last issue of great practical significance, the control of local authority expenditure. In the old days much of the control was informal, local government being willing to fall into line broadly with what central government wanted. The Tories then messed the whole business up by various crude forms of control. This alerted local politicians to the wider possibilities of rate-financed expenditure. And it moved the government into the lunacies of rate capping.

But as this government demonstrates every day, it is easier to get into an economic mess than to get out of one. It cannot be argued that rate-financed expenditure has no macro-economic effects, or that local authority pay settlements do not have national consequences. It is possible to devise all sorts of systems involving subsidies to those who do what they are told, and taxes on those who do not. New versions of rate support grant can be dreamed up. I am not at all sure how worthwhile such byzantine complexities will turn out to be. Another possibility would be to reduce the powers and responsibilities of local government even more, while extending those at the centre.

The Labour Party's policy is to decentralise, and to encourage local democracy and participation. This may be wholly admirable in that it gives greatest emphasis to local needs as locally perceived. Unfortunately, the main problems that confront us — unemployment, regeneration of the economy, and the avoidance of excessive inflation, are macroeconomic in character, and require central initiatives. The question remains, therefore, whether the local authorities can be persuaded to fall into line. Perhaps, like the unions they can be brought into a national economic agreement. Without it a question mark remains over the speed at which overall economic recovery can occur. □

This is the first of a weekly column of analysis and debate on the central issues facing the economy.

No 2: The Co-op

THE VERY worst chance of being a Labour Party constituency delegate is to be an ordinary, active, canvassing member of your ward. Far better to be a Jewish woman under 25 in an affiliated union, who's a social worker with legal training, an interest in community health, and education, and who after going to night school for a course on the Webbs, drops in at the labour club for a pint.

You can then choose whether to be a delegate from your ward, the Young Socialists, the Women's section, Poale Zion, your union, the National Organisation of Labour Students, The Society of Labour Lawyers, The Labour Association of Social Workers, the Socialist Health and Education Associations, the Labour Clubs or the Fabians. But this way you'll be too busy to ever see an ordinary voter in the flesh and you'll have to work overtime to pay the subscriptions.

There are easier and cheaper ways to get your knife into a sitting MP. You can join an unregistered organisation founded in the revolutionary year of 1917, with more members than Militant, its own press, massive resources, and delegates on two thirds of the Country's CLP's: the Co-op.

The Co-op may be losing ground on the retail front, but politically it pays big dividends. One pound makes you one of the eight million members of the Co-operative Union for life — and even after, if the membership records aren't kept up to date. But on this side of the attentions of the Co-operative Funeral Services (one of the more successful earners) a mere pound a year gets you membership of the Co-operative Party — and a chance of one of its automatic five GMC seats to pick the PPC of your choice.

Yet the Co-operative Party isn't actually affiliated to the Labour Party, doesn't go to Annual Conference, nor does it vote in Labour's NEC elections. But it does have seven Co-operative Pary MPs in the Commons and is entitled to field up to 30 'Labour and Co-operative' candidates.

With 13,000 individual members of its own paying their pounds, Co-op party membership is going up again after a long decline. Les Goodrum, the party's director of information, claims that the party's conference in March this year had a younger set of delegates than ever before. There are signs that the party's pledge to 'the Co-operative Commonwealth' is an idea coming into its time.

The Party reports a growing interest from 'refugees' who are shell-shocked by the internecine warfare by slogan in some Labour wards. But you can still practice an acceptably constructive degree of factionalism. The Federation of Progressive Co-operators is a Robert Owenite ginger group for the whole of the co-operative movement, concerned at the growth of the 'Building Society Syndrome'. Building societies are owned by their members, but few doubt that they are run by directors and management. The Co-ops have the same problem — but their managers can't even plead the financial success and expansion of the building societies to excuse the counter-revolution in the stores.

While the retail sector of the British economy expanded as never before, Co-op managers have carved themselves into an ever decreasing share of the market. With serene complacency they deride activist involvement, preening themselves on their professionalism. One former director of the CWS who'd helped direct the loss of half the movement's trade sermonised: 'No well managed business can afford to mix politics with retailing as a consumer package'. Tell that to Allied Lyons, United Biscuits and the other Tory donors!

This is reflected in local battles against managers to get Party posters and information in shops, to boycott South African goods, or, most recently, to ban sales of beds made by strike-torn Silentnight.

The Co-op Party Conference hasn't too much power, since the party is, constitutionally, only a department of the Co-operative Union, representing the Societies. While preaching decentralisation, the party has more than a touch of centralism itself. Its NEC can sack any of its own members who in their opinion does not act in conformity with a declaration of belief in the Co-operative Commonwealth.

Recognising their attraction to groups who'd like an extra five firing platforms on a GMC, the Co-op Party has taken steps to stop infiltration which are so effective that it's actually quite difficult to join. First find a Co-op Society which isn't closed down, then see if they will issue a share book. Then find your Co-op Party Branch and join. But expect to be scrutinised very carefully indeed for the stigmata of infiltrativeness. Then wait. If a week was a long time in politics for Harold Wilson, what is two years? It's the time you have to wait to hold any office at all in the Co-operative Party, including CLP delegate. But remember — it's only a pound a year while you wait!

The Rochdale pioneers wanted cheap and unadulterated food and were prepared to work hard to ensure it. It is impossible to revive the same degree of enthusiasm over whether you buy your Es at ASDA or the Co-op. But the ideal represented by co-operatives and collective self-help still has a lot going for it, even if it's in the field of worker and housing co-operatives. There could be more going for the Co-op Party than a clutch of delegates at reselection time if it abandoned its semi-necrophiliac attachment to the shops. Perhaps.

Ian Williams

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BUSY IZZY IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

I. F. (Izzy) Stone wrote every word of his *Weekly*; it attracted 77,000 subscribers and the scrutiny of every decision-maker in Washington. JOHN LLOYD talked to a rare prophet — and a rare believer in the world of journalism where 'you can't be a cynic and a good reporter'

THERE IS GOOD and evil in the world, truth and falsehood. A journalist *can* know which is which: *can* appeal to good, *can* speak the truth. The truth, for a journalist, is never wholly knowable: at best, it is a jigsaw with some pieces missing: often, a jigsaw with only a few pieces extant. But you know what you *think* is true: and you have to affirm that — but without arrogance, because you might be wrong, or it might be proven to be false, or evil turn to good.

This is the journalists' creed according to I. F. (Izzy) Stone. It is a very high and moral creed, of the kind that might provoke a horse laugh down Fleet Street and certainly would among the discerning of Fleet Street's customers (when Rupert Murdoch re-launched the *Sun* in 1969, he said it would 'stand for freedom, truth and beauty' — on the front page). But they should consider: if this can be believed by a 78-year-old man who started on New Jersey papers in his mid teens, who spent a decade hammering out daily copy in New York, another doing the same in Washington, who ran his own paper for a decade and a half, who learned classical Greek in his 70s and plans to write a book on freedom of thought in his 80s *and whom many think is the best journalist of his time* — then it's worth reflection. And Izzy Stone is worth knowing.

Where Stone is remembered now, it is for the *I. F. Stone's Weekly*: it was an eight-page Washington-based newsletter, simply printed, without illustrations of any kind, which began life with 5,300 subscribers in January 1953 at $5 a year, and finally closed, with some 77,000, in December 1971. Written — all 4,500 words of it — by Stone himself, the administration of it done by his wife, Esther, the *Weekly* is still an entirely remarkable publication because of the radical new process Stone brought to journalism. He *read*: then he *thought*: then he wrote. It was pretty racy at the time: now, in this country at least, it is downright unheard of in large tracts of the press and broadcast media.

Stone rarely got scoops of the 'leak' kind: he did not have the resources to invest in investigative journalism which teases out (or fails to) a story over months. Instead, he read the record — of Congressional and Senate hearings, of Presidential interviews and announcements, of official reports, of the newspapers themselves: spotted the flaws and inconsistencies and hidden agendas the rushed coverage of the day had missed, and pursued them, nailing them to the floor with a rigorous intensity which he managed to combine with stylish prose and witty headlines. 'I tried,' he says, 'to get my stuff from the horse's mouth — or the other end, at any rate.'

By the end of its career, the *Weekly* was read by every decision-maker in the world's most powerful capital, and Stone was being wooed by those who had earlier sought to destroy him: President Lyndon Johnson sent word that he could have the White House press card denied him for most of his *Weekly* career — but by then 'I didn't want to be beholden to Johnson — he was a great one for making people his satellites.'

STONE WAS the son of first generation Russian Jews who ran a small store in the Quaker town of Haddonfield, New Jersey, where he started his first paper at the age of 14. Called *Progress*, it ran for three (monthly) issues, buoyed up with ads from the socialist-inclined business people the young Stone had met in the Socialist Party he had joined just before starting the paper. 'It was a success, but my father discovered I wasn't doing my homework so he made me close it.'

The tension between 'bookworming' (as he calls it) and journalism was to continue: he

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finished high school 49th in a class of 52 because he worked for a paper in nearby Camden: his first story as Haddonfield Correspondent for the paper was an imaginative account of the ghost of the town's founder, the Quaker Amy McFadden, rising at night to clean the plaque set near her supposed grave. 'After I wrote it, I thought, my God, they'll fire me for this. But when I picked up the paper after school, I'd got a two-column headline and a by-line, and a 25 cents an inch bonus.' It was, he says, the only story he has ever written knowing it to be false.

It was a liberally-inclined paper called the *Courier-Post*, and he worked for it every day until late in the evening, travelling back with his editor in the tramcar, waking the weary man up when it reached his stop. Scraping into the University of Pennsylvania as a philosophy major, he paid for his courses by working on the New Jersey copy desks of the *Philadelphia Record*, then of the *Philadelphia Enquirer*.

Even for a voracious reader and hard worker, the choice had to be made between philosophy and journalism by the third year — 'I loved the smell of ink and newsrooms so much, I quit college. Fifty years later, the college presented me with a degree I never took, when I was class speaker. I began my speech by saying — this is a great day for the retarded.'

That was in 1927: Stone dodged between papers in Philadelphia for some years, until David Stern, owner of the *Post* and the *Record*, bought the *New York Post* and took Stone to New York with him, from where he wrote editorials which appeared in all three papers — one of the youngest editorial writers in the country. Stern's papers were left-liberal: and in those New Deal years, they were among the few which supported Roosevelt (even, with Stone, sniped at him a bit *from the left*). His move to New York meant a resignation from the Socialist Party: he had come to feel (see box) that a journalist couldn't be a party member, and he disliked the sectarian maelstrom of the argumentative city. He supported the former Presbyterian minister-turned-socialist Norman Thomas for the Presidency in 1928, but 'the atmosphere of New York was one of sectarian politics, and I thought I'd stay clear of all that stuff. I wanted to be free to respond to anyone who had a case'.

Stone ultimately proved too much for a then hard-pressed Stern: he recalls the break.

> He was under a lot of pressure, being called a Communist and all — he felt I was getting too radical for him. I was his fair-haired boy, and had been getting away with murder. He wanted me to support action against mass picketing: I said, goddamn it, the Supreme Court has just upheld its legality — which it just had. So he finally broke down and said, look, I can't get so and so's advertising unless we do this. So I said, goddamn it, I wasn't born yesterday, I know I'm working in a whorehouse, why didn't you say that to start with and I'd write it. But don't give me a big argument about it being unconstitutional when it's not.

Stern demoted him to reporter, hoping he would leave: he finally did, in 1940, when the left-wing weekly, the *Nation*, appointed him Washington Editor.

Stone's great coup

For the next 13 years, Stone workd for the *Nation* and, after 1946, for the left-wing New York daily, *PM*, a journal still remembered with great affection by radicals of the time. His great coup was a series of pieces written after being taken on a Jewish refugee ship running the British blockade into Palestine just after the war: it ran in episodes in *PM*, pushing up the sales in that Jewish town to break-even point for the first time. It folded in 1948, he did a column for the *Post* again for six months, moved to the new left daily, the New York *Daily Compass*: if folded in late 1952, and he found himself out of a job. In January of the next year he started the *Weekly*, to 'carry on doing the things I believed in' — in the middle of the cold war and a red scare.

> I had two things in mind: one, the fight for civil liberties and two, the fight for peace. And since I was writing in a hostile atmosphere, I didn't want a paper which was a shrieker or a screamer, and claim I had inside dope or scoops I didn't have — though I did get some scoops later. I didn't want to crap it up. I wanted a paper which would be radical in content but sober in typography and writing. I wanted to have humour and to give perspective to events, and to be able to prove my points from the Government's own official documents. When I could quote a hearing in which an official had said something under oath, or when I could find a very important omission in an official document and I could refer the reader to the page — well, that might not persuade him, but he couldn't dismiss it as sensational rubbish.

Stone developed his slim resources into an asset: forced to depend on written material rather than access to high officials, he learned that the former was more valuable. 'A public figure can say what he likes to you in private: he can let you know, unattributably, what a fine person he is and how he wants to do things differently. But it is the public pronouncements which matter: that's on the record, and that reflects the "truth" in the sense that it is a balance of the forces acting upon him. It's what he can commit himself to.'

BUT WHERE STONE'S radicalism deepens into a journalism which is an example for all journalists in all seasons is in his appreciation of *power*. His lesson is one which radical journalists especially have to learn and relearn constantly — the limits of the possible:

> You cannot understand events without understanding that power is a prison. The first thing you determine in judging an individual in office is some reasonable estimate as to what are the limits of his power. That is to say, a man might be a president of a bank, he might also be a devout Christian and wish to sell all his goods and give them to the poor, but if he tried that he'd be in the bughouse and out of a job. So there are very severe limits: if you have no power, you're free. But in every prison there is some leeway — someone with courage and ingenuity can do more than one who's lazy or a coward. Find out what can be done and judge on that: you must always have a sense of the possible.

You see the difficulty of following the creed, again. It's like Kipling's 'If': 'If you can understand all power's limitations/And yet upbraid that power for reforms missed/Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it/And what is more, you'll be a journalist!'

But so be it: Stone is a Kipling admirer, 'If' is a fine piece of popular moral teaching and few institutions need it more than today's journalism, which public relations increasingly seduces into sleek indifference. Stone was willing always to stay alert, never to shut the book of his mind on anyone, even to please his left/liberal circle. 'Take (President) Eisenhower: Eisenhower was a man of peace.

Stone on journalism

'I felt — I still feel — that you shouldn't really have a strong party affiliation as a journalist. But at the same time a journalist should do whatever his conscience tells him he should. There are lots of different kinds of journalists. One kind wants to serve the great currents of his time, and should do it. But not in a narrow, partisan way, because the truth gets mangled in the process. Because then you're covering your preconceptions instead of the news: because there's always surprises.

'One of the most important things is to be free of your audience. An audience can be very confining. One of the most important tests of a journalist is to say things his audience doesn't want to hear.

'We [journalists] are sort of historians on a low level. This is the role that [Thomas] Jefferson gave us: he gave American journalists a status that journalists in the UK just don't have — because of the first amendment ("no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press"). He said that if he had to choose between a free Government and a free press, he'd choose a free press.

'The journalist in England, if I may say so, unless he works for the one or two top papers, is not regarded as a gentleman. He follows the horses, and occasionally turds may fall before him, but he's not a gentleman. Whereas in Washington, they're tops, and that's very bad for them. There are some very pompous American journalists. But for all that, there's an assumption of public duty, of obligation, of an important role in society.

'There's a lot of know-nothingness about the press, on the left as well as on the right. There's people on the left who don't *read*: unless they see a headline saying Ronald Reagan is a son-of-a-bitch, they say the press has sold out. The papers are *worth* reading and studying.

'You never know whether something is true or not. You only know whether you think it's true. You know whether or not you're a goddamn liar: that much you *do* know. It's all you have — all you have to cling to.

'You have to be awfully smart — smarter than anyone I know, including myself — to know when a lie, even when told for the best of motives, can be more helpful than the truth. It's a lot safer to tell the truth, report the truth.

'You have to have a certain amount of faith in people, and hope the truth will prevail. You can't be a cynic and a good reporter. You have to believe, not in clichés, but essentially that people are sufficiently reasonable that they can be moved by argument, reason and compassion.

'There's no point in freedom if you know the truth to start with.'

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One of the things I went against the current on the Left for was in supporting Eisenhower for peace in Korea (in 1953). I recognised that Eisenhower was a soldier but not a militarist, a man of good instincts.'

He learned, too, that just as something approaching truth can be possible, there are people inside the machines of power who want something like it told. 'In all these bureaucracies there's good people. And if a reporter shows he's well informed, he's not lazy, he pinpoints his questions, they'll respect it. And if you don't come in with a chip on your shoulder, and assume the guy's a son-of-a-bitch — you can get a lot, he may even be in sympathy with what you're doing.'

He had closed the *Weekly* before Watergate: incipient heart trouble, which has not dulled his subsequent energy, was the cause. But he admired the Woodward and Bernstein investigations:

> They illustrated my idea that if you're covering a department, or the White House, it's very hard to escape its influence. They mould you, and you get to like them and they you. And if you don't play ball they can play very dirty, they can give scoops to your competitor, or they can call your boss and say: this young fella of yours covering the State Department — we know he's not a Communist, we don't go in for that stuff any more, but really, he has some very peculiar ideas — and boy, that can be *enough*.
>
> But essentially Woodward and Bernstein were a couple of police reporters, with the kind of disrespect for public officials that's true of every small town newspaper, but they hadn't lost it. [Ben] Bradlee [executive editor] on the *Post* did a very good job, he made them check everything two times at least. Because leaks are very treacherous, and these leaks were unsupported by documentation. Bradlee deserves a lot of credit for backing them up, and so does Mrs [Katherine] Graham [chairwoman of the *Post*] because she's awfully high up, like an English lady. Bumping off a President is quite a heavy number, quite a feat — and it was just like poor Charles I losing his head, it was very therapeutic, it reverberated all round the world.
>
> Somebody, of course, did it to Nixon. Nobody knows who Deep Throat was, anybody who claims to doesn't know. This was an intrigue, and the press has to be terribly careful of these intra-mural intrigues. But in this case it was pro bono publico.

Pulling Out from Apartheid a guide for action.

Tower Hamlets International Solidarity

As the situation in Southern Africa deteriorates 'Pulling Out From Apartheid: A Guide For Action' states the arguments for economic disinvestment and suggests practical action to achieve that end.

Britain remains the major underwriter of apartheid, the world's most notorious political system. This guide provides up to date information on the situation in Southern Africa and names the British companies and banks that provide the money and materials to sustain the apartheid regime.

The guide suggests that we don't have to be stock-brokers or merchant bankers to be able to change that pattern of collusion and outlines immediate action that all of us can take - whether as trade unionists, rate-payers or consumers - to begin to break the links between this country and racist South Africa.

Book available from: **Tower Hamlets International Solidarity, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, London E2 6HG,** for £1.80 (incl p&p)

Freedom of Thought

Stone hopes to finish a long-planned book on freedom of thought — the thing he prizes above all else. He got 'bogged down in the trial of Socrates', so abandoned his initial ambition for a discursive account, and now plans a series of 12 sketches of great individuals who advanced thought's freedom — such as Peter Abelard, Jefferson and Nicholas of Cusa. This last was a pre-Renaissance cardinal, a papal legate in Constantinople, who wrote, in 'De Pace Fidei', a vision of an ecumenical heaven in which all faiths — Christian, Jewish, Buddhist — might worship together for the glory of God. 'Every approach to the mystery must be treated with respect. You can never known which is absolute truth.'

And Milton will be there, too: his *Areopagitica* is a sacred Stone text. It was addressed to Parliament in 1644 to urge the abolition of a new-made law requiring all prospective publications to be submitted to the censor — though four years earlier, that radical Parliament had abolished the Star Chamber and its licensing system. The protest, couched in the form of a Greek oration, is thus addressed to Milton's *own* party, and is for Stone the more valuable.

It is a difficult work for contemporary eyes, highly artificial even in its own day, stuffed with contemporary allusions and puns: but passages ring like a bell.

> The State shall be my Governors, but not my critic; they may be mistaken in the choice of a licenser, as easily as this licenser may be mistaken in an author . . . truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopolised and traded by tickets and statutes and standards . . . nor is it to the common people less than a reproach; for if we are so jealous over them, as that we do not trust them with an English pamphlet, what do we but censure them for a giddy, vicious and underground people; in such a sick and weak state of faith and discretion, as to be able to take nothing down but through the pipe of a licenser?

'I'll be 80 a year from this December: I don't know how much energy and eyesight I'll have left for the book.' Plenty, it now seems: plenty, we should hope. There are few beacons in the trade of journalism, few true prophets. Stone is one. □

The Left: Cont'd from p.7

Foot stop the descent into chaos of the Labour Party as the SDP worked to establish its claim to be the true guardians of a radical, social democratic tradition? The uniquely shoddy press campaign against Tatchell reflected the no holds barred nature of the political argument. Unfortunately, it was so disgraceful that it allowed the Left to focus on that as evidence of media conspiracy, rather than on whether there was anything about its politics or conduct that needed to be changed.

The failure of the battle against rate-capping, which was promoted as the new front line against Thatcherism, has predictably been attributed to the sell out of various individuals. Again it has occasioned very little hard political thinking about what the limits of councilaction are in any major political contest and how, in particular, both trade unions and the recipients of the services being supposedly defended, can be involved in such politics.

SUCH REFUSALS to probe the difficult political questions are nothing new in the Labour Left. Asked why the Left is so weak in British politics, Nigel Stanley of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, says sharply: 'it has no theory.' Which is undoubtedly true.

The dominant ethos of today's hard Left is Trotskyist. There are few actual devotees of Trotsky amongst them; but Trotsky is the only political writer of note to have devoted his thoughts to how those doomed not to hold power should think and organise. Hence the tactic of entrism which takes for granted that the 'entering' organisation can never win mass support on its terms.

Such a political tradition — of permanent opposition, of continuous reproach of compromisers and betrayers — was the only alternative to old style Labourism for the political generation which came into the Labour Party in the '70s. Twenty years earlier they might have joined the Communist Party, then home for the young who rejected 'reformism'. By the 1970s the CP was slipping fast in numbers and influence. It did, unlike the Labour Party, have a tradition of theory and strategic thinking. But that led it into 'eurocommunism', an unpalatable and undirective body of thought for a generation that wanted action and total distance from the 'old guard'. Nor, as a party that had no connection with organs of State power, did the communists have anything to offer a Labour Left welded to the machinery of State and party power.

Thus the generation going into politics in the 1970s was largely absorbed by the preoccupation with inner party matters or, more importantly, with the megalomanic view that if only a Labour government stuck to the right policies it could do absolutely anything it wanted to. Meanwhile, those who believe that party life is restrictive and obsessional, who do not believe that even governments with correct thoughts can revolutionise their country, have ditched party politics. They are in the movements, for peace or women or gay rights or other 'single issues' which everyone in Labour's Left is willing to praise as allies in the cause — but only on the narrow terms of that Labour Left. □

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DIARY

David Edgar

I am not notorious as an apologist for British Rail, and am known to keep my enthusiasm for Euston Station under particularly effective control. But, credit where credit is due, the refurbishment of Euston's catering facilities is near to a triumph. Up until quite recently, 'catering' at Euston consisted of a horrible stand-up snack-bar, a repulsive cafeteria and an over-priced sit-down 'restaurant' serving a selection of eatables only marginally more palatable than those offered on the trains themselves. Then, Casey Jones appeared, which, as one who is not particularly aggressive about burgers, was an improvement, and then a veritable plethora of franchises mushroomed, making the old place look for all the world like a proper station, like Victoria, say, or even Waterloo. Now, with the exception of Casey Jones and Pointers (which serves rather suspect fillings in fists of dark brown pastry) all the above and more are grouped in a nicely and effectively designed mall, where the truly Gorkian bar used to be. Here are not only burgers, croissants and pizzas, reasonably priced and attractively presented, but also, would you believe, actual salads, real bits of green stuff served unencased in pastry or bread. My only caveat is the cuisines on offer in such profusion remain stubbornly atlanto-centrist: surely the concession-granters of Travellers Fare know of the delights of shrimp balls, samosas and souvlakia?

○

That was one of the questions I wanted to put to British Rail. I was also interested in how the concessions were granted — the relationship between the socialised enterprise and the small entrepreneur (if indeed they are private — apparently Casey Jones was set up by BR itself as the big burger joints were only interested in the big burly stations). So with some difficulty I obtained the number of British Rail HQ (Directory Inquiries — up until privatisation such a remarkably effective and helpful service — is now positively Romanian in its sullenness and inflexibility). When they finally answered I was put through to a helpful man in the press office, who gave me the number of the Travellers Fare press person, whose switchboard is in Waterloo but whose extension is in Paddington. As the latter was unanswered on several attempts, and the former not frankly too helpful on a similar number of occasions, I decided to ring BR HQ once again and throw myself on the mercy of the helpful man. That was engaged and so I gave up.

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I discovered that Euston had been much translated en route back from holiday. Since then I have been catching up on the news, or, let me be honest, *first of all* on what's been happening in Doonesbury, which I suppose a few *NS* readers may need telling is the Pulitzer-prize winning American cartoon strip at the back of the *Guardian*. In fact, 'cartoon strip' is hardly an adequate description for the art of Garry Trudeau, whose extraordinary ear for the wry ironies of upwardly-ageing America has elevated the form on to a different plane (relatively recent, eg: Advertising Executive to New Recruit: 'We want you to start specialising in ... uh ... young achievers, you know, people your age who are ... upscale and ... um lifestyle conscious ...' Mike Doonesbury (for it is he): 'You're trying not to say the "Y" word, aren't you?') Recently, Trudeau's plotting painted him to a pair of corners: he'd both given the irrepressibly idle Zonker Harris a $23 million lottery win, *and* killed off his junkie uncle Duke in a Haitian overdose of unprecedented proportions. Happily, Trudeau was able to free two of his best characters with one bound — Duke was not dead but sold into zombiedom, Zonker donated most of his winnings to secure his release. The rest of Zonker's windfall has been devoted to the purchase of a British viscountcy, which allowed the lad to attend the Royal Wedding and revealed once again how strangely unacute is Mr Trudeau's ear for British speech. Now, however, all that is behind us, both Zonker and Duke are back on track, and all is right with the world.

○

In addition to catching up on the prints, I've been trying to make some serious inroads into the video backlog. Among the treats I've now experienced — though whether I've the heart to wipe it is another question — is Anthony Mingella's chillingly perceptive and painful adumbration of the break-up of a yuppyish marriage, *What if it's Raining?*, in which he

demonstrated the most extraordinary talent for the completely plausible portrayal of the agonies of familial rift (tricky because so often a matter of understatement and indeed unstatement — the dark side of Mr Trudeau's comedy). Although sadly shot on video, a medium with all the subtlety and lightness of touch of a Frank Bruno title fight (*particularly* out of doors), the direction and performances fully matched the sometimes unbearable truthfulness of the writing.

○

Although I hope I would have held the above opinion ten years ago, I might not have stated it, on the grounds that Mr Minghella is a naturalistic writer, and naturalism is what we were all about wiping off the face of the earth. My change of public heart is partly because I have just written a small-cast, single set, domestic piece myself.

But change it is. When I was little we would debate questions of form — and condemn petty-bourgeois deviationism — with all the passion of the Latest London Labour Liaison. Recently, I attended a conference — organised by *City Limits* and *Marxism Today* — which assessed the GLC's cultural and artistic policy, and highly interesting much of it was too. But was I alone, at the end of the day, in sensing that there was a lacuna in there somewhere — the lack of any particular passion about the art itself (as opposed to by whom it was made, to whom it was directed and how it was promoted). Among the many bête noires of the new form of culturally conservative Thatcherism (perhaps we should dub it Thatcherism Boyso-Tebbitist) is the modern movement in the arts, and part of the fight-back must include a left reassessment of its relationship to the avant-garde project. There have always been those on the Left whose populism has got the better of them on this question, perhaps one or two within the environs of the GLC. But it's high time the debate was joined.

ROGER WODDIS

Hot seat

'PM denies rift with Tebbit' — news headline
Some office chairs have exploded, due to being fitted with nitrogen gas cylinders instead of conventional springs — Guardian *news story*

The Chair he sat in, though of stone,
Burned his composure to the bone;
But still he sat, despite the heat,
Determined to retain his seat,
Like an ascetic who impales
His body on a bed of nails.
Some queried his evasive smile,
Some winced at his abrasive style
And even murmured, 'He's no gent —
Isn't it time that *fakir* went?'

He had no wish to change the line
Of Saatchi and Saatchi's old design:
'They served us well the last time, Ma'am —
Why switch to Young and Rubicam?'
But having an effective Chair
That stands up well to wear and tear
Hangs less on nitrogen or springs
Than on a symmetry of wings.

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CLEVER, HANDSOME, WITTY MAN SEEKS . . .

GEOFFREY SHERIDAN takes a deep breath and comes clean on the lonesome trail of a Lefty in search of love

I HAVE BEEN dropping hints to friends, saying I had been going out meeting new people. L is inquisitive. 'You mean you go out on the streets at night?' Kerb-crawling I haven't been. After discussing it with strangers I have met I at last admit to a friend — I'm on the lonely hearts trail.

I shouldn't have been surprised at L's reaction. She is supportive and fascinated. 'How else *can* you meet people?' she asks. I don't have an answer. But like many of the women I've met through box numbers I find that the stigma I feared is imaginary.

My trail started off badly. When for the second time a caller didn't show, I was angry. I made a rule then. If a caller was not prepared to give me her phone number than I wasn't prepared to follow through. It was too one-sided.

The third call came from G, and I was doubtful about it. The instant we met I knew I was right. It was obvious we were ill-suited, and I was surprised that she had responded to my letter. While brief, the letter indicated my background and interests. (In fact, it is a standard letter which I roll off on a word-processor, to which no one has objected.)

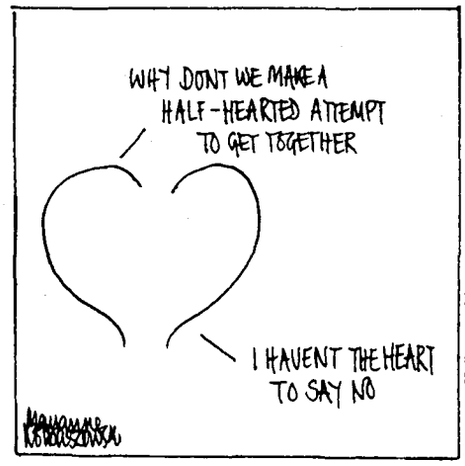
R changed the picture. My age, ebullient, and exuding self-confidence, she greeted me at my front door like a lost friend. Towards the end of the evening it seemed that I might be looking no further.

The ad was her second; the first had resulted in a year-long relationship which had recently ended. But it wasn't until we were strolling back from a restaurant that what had been a hint become a confirmed fact. R had already met someone she expected to be the next love of her life. She had arranged the evening with me because she 'fancied an interesting conversation'. The parting was definitive: she might ring in a few months. It was an unexpected and hurtful denouement.

After my experience with G, I had begun to say 'No' on the phone; not a nice thing to have to do, but I decided it was better than walking away after an uncomfortable few hours. I noticed that the ad from one woman I turned down appeared several times. The term 'lonely hearts' has an application that most of us do not appreciate.

EVENTS TOOK a dramatic turn with the correspondence which arrived in response to my own ad in *City Limits*, the London listings magazine. I had expected no more than two or three replies. There were 20, and they brought about a transformation. From posting appeals to anonymous box numbers, I had become the eager recipient. Sifting, evaluating, being in control. And feeling flattered.

At first I planned to see everyone. It seemed only reasonable. Before I had set out on my own lonely-heart trail I had heard of a woman



Marianne Kolbuszewski

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Marianne Kolbuszewski

friend of a friend who had received 40 replies to her ad and she met all the respondents, which took months. It was to take a few more encounters before I realised how absurd that project would be. Aside from mounting exhaustion, what point was there in spending time with someone I had put at the end of my list?

Short letters were among the most appealing. They conveyed a sense of self-assuredness; a lack of desperation — 'Meet me if you like'. E came over on the same afternoon that I phoned and was my first real introduction to the community of lonely hearts. Not that she had participated much herself, but she told me of friends' experiences. One had received a letter from a man who E knew was already in a relationship. A male friend had acknowledged sleeping with the five women who wrote to him. Was he handsome, I wondered, or a fantasist?

Daunting woman

E, who is physically striking, said that she had sent in her own ad to *City Limits*. But she thought she might have made herself sound too daunting. This was confirmed a fortnight later when she received only two replies. That was when she admitted that, bizarrely, she had placed two ads in the same issue. The second was frivolous and brought 20 less-than-serious responses, including one from a Mayfair resident offering champagne.

D turned out to have lived with an acquaintance of mine (it *is* a small world). D had described herself in her ad as 'attractive'. She is. She is also pragmatic. Aside from sueing my acquaintance for more money than he was already paying for their child, she had started advertising when she was 26, half a dozen years previously, and now she places an ad whenever she is in need of a love affair. Personal columns are part of D's lifestyle, and she encourages friends to use them. As we went our separate ways, D said: 'Don't tell X (her former partner). He'll only say, "She's at it again".'

In the ordinary way of things, testing for the possibility of a relationship means probing, interpreting signs, hoping for the best. It takes time to get personal, especially with those we meet in our network — at work, a club, a party — when there is always the gossip machine to consider.

Unusual intimacy

Lonely hearts transcends these barriers. You *know* that your contact is available (generally speaking). You *have* to be personal, even if you are in the habit of keeping up a front, of image-making, which I suspect goes down badly with lonely hearts. Explaining who you are and indicating what you are looking for, which may well be the hardest part, are inherent in lonely-heart encounters. You meet as equals, and the compulsion to be open means that no holds are barred on the questions that can be asked. It can make for an unusual intimacy.

Strain arises from the accumulation of engagements which are pleasant but definitive in the parting. Being personal exacts a price in terms of emotional energy, never mind journeys to the other end of the metropolis.

My friend L tells me I am brave for doing all this. It is not a word I would choose. She persuaded me to write up the experience, which I set out to do under the cloak of anonymity. A few days later, when I had begun to toy with the dangerous idea of putting my own name on the article, I met B. Reticent behind her large-frame glasses, she explained that she had got to know all of her friends through the personal columns. She considered 'lonely hearts' a poor description of the process. She was entirely open about her use of the personal columns. So what was stopping me, I wondered.

L is sure that people we know have indulged in lonely hearts. What holds others back? It was a concern not to be labelled which had inhibited me. Before I set out on the trail I knew of one person who had participated. A leading figure in a far-Left organisation, he was one of the 40 men who had responded to the friend of a friend. Perhaps because he was little more than a name, for me he became 'Y, the lonely heart'. □

Calling
L ... G ... R ... E ... D ...
(and Geoffrey!)

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See p.33 for details.

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DANCE

To the music of ponderous time

Stephanie Jordan

Brilliant dancers it may have, but the Bolshoi is gripped by the deadening hand of its boss

AN ENTREPRENEURIAL outfit called Entertainment Corporation tugged the flagship of Soviet Art, the Bolshoi Ballet, to Covent Garden amidst unshaven, fag-waving bouncers at the door, private champagne parties jamming the foyers and an unfamiliar celebrity audience, eager to bay at every male leap. These are not the best circumstances in which to appreciate art, but the repertoire chosen to tour Britain richly rewarded the expectations of the £40-a-seat brigade.

These programmes bear the stamp of one man, Party machine Yuri Grigorovich, whose domination of the Bolshoi system for 22 years (as artistic director, chief choreographer, producer, professor of choreography) is no blessing. If he brings some coherence to the dancers' style, he also brings doom to the repertory.

The classic *Raymonda* is included (in the inevitable revision by Grigorovich) and then there are the monolithic full-length works that he created: attempts to fit steps to the kind of scenarios that no reputable Western choreographer would touch. It is a repertoire stuck in the past, although, naturally, the historical themes with which Grigorovich is concerned — *Ivan the Terrible*, unifier of Holy Mother Russia, *Spartacus*, the insurrectionary slave, the recent *The Golden Age*, young workers versus decadent bourgeoisie — suit today's Soviet message very comfortably. Hence Grigorovich's unchallenged position of authority. The works are unanimously dressed in various historical-realist modes by Grigorovich's favoured collaborator of 30 years, Simon Virsaladze.

Grigorovich's dramatic instincts are leisurely: a series of hermetic episodes, monologues, crowd scenes, love duets (the hero must have a wife or lover). There are reflections on the past: 'Spartacus cannot reconcile himself to captivity'; preparations for the next encounter: 'Ivan finds new strength in revenge'; gathering of the forces: 'Spartacus tells his men to form an army against the Romans'. More crucially, Grigorovich's choreographic instincts are lethargic. There is grandiose acting, huge leaps, restless crowds running, strutting and jumping with spears, shields, banners or bell-ropes. The assemblage of steps is crude — nothing so much as a phrase here — strapped to the musical accents, the formations reverting to dull symmetries and the counterpoint (when it should exist) remaining elementary. The big duets contain spectacular but unlikely images: the ballerina upturned behind her partner's back or clutching her pointe shoe are favourites. I saw no sign of an interesting or developing relationship.

An elderly Russian emigrée addressing me at the performance of *The Golden Age* thought it a huge joke: the setting 1923, 'It was *not* a golden age!' Nor were there, in the youthful Soviet Union, night clubs such as figure in Grigorovich's ballet, less still youngsters bopping to *No, No, Nanette*. Though the exponents were later to be gagged, murdered or re-educated, experimental arts flourished at that time. *The Golden Age*, an original ballet (1930), was just one of many works to suffer denunciation in *Pravda*, its theme the eventual uniting of brothers, Soviet or class enemy, through the joys of work, the title being the name of a fictitious capitalist exhibition at which youths initially clash. Innocent enough, but not when Marxist/Leninist ideas were subject to frequent re-interpretation.

Rather than restore a work from a courageous era of Russian art, Grigorovich has salvaged only name and score, playing safe with his own libretto. Now, the Golden Age is the Soviet answer to Isherwood's Berlin cabaret in an improbable Black Sea fishing town. Our hero and heroine, Boris and Rita, are radiant Soviet youths resisting the decadent blandishments of the foxtrot. Shostakovich's score, considerable in scale, is insufficiently important to survive such a production.

The Golden Age was proclaimed as up-tempo in relation to the other Grigorovich epics. This is an illusion. The dancers move faster and for longer, in phalanxes and battalions of *jetés* across the stage or on the spot. All hyperactive, those on the sidelines fidget while the central forces take the brunt of strain and glory. But the fundamental speed, determined by the succession and intensity of choreographic ideas, is funereal.

Ivan magnifies all that is wrong with Grigorovich. *Spartacus* is the choreographer at his most successful — Khachaturian (at once grossly cheap and boldly ethnic) giving the piece some momentum and Virsaladze's designs for once changing smoothly enough to allow each scene to flow directly into the next.

Grigorovich seems non-committal about Petipa's *Raymonda*, ridding it of conventional mime and revising it with Gorsky additions and Virsaladze's Hammer-Gothic drapery. But, at least here, there was opportunity to see fine dancers in Petipa choreography worthy of them.

It was *Raymonda* that showed us Lyudmila Semenyaka dancing the title role with a quality rarely known to Westerners. Coached by Galina Ulanova, she became a true metaphor for supreme aspiration, an ideal reached and enjoyed, the embodiment of what the classical language can do better than any other. In Britain today, too often we see the struggle rather than the triumph. But here was a superb lift in the upper body and a technical assurance that made what usually looks awkward buoyant and brilliant — springs on pointe across the stage, for instance — a precise musicality at her command and an utterly harmonious coordination of the whole body. You rarely see a dancer with such range — from poised and contained expression to rapacious conquest of the stage.

The ability to control space, to jump out powerfully and bravely, is an admirable characteristic of much Bolshoi dancing and Grigorovich makes full use of it. Otherwise, his style conflicts with the needs of the classics. He encourages his heroines to stream over

Spartacus just about carried by admirers, followers and Khachaturian

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their partners, cascades of maidenly virtue. For this sort of thing, prima ballerina Natalia Bessmertnova is still quite adequate, dancing mainly with her arms and shoulders, well past the best that we knew 12 years ago. The heroes are indulged in pyrotechnics with muscularity on full display. It must be said that Grigorovich's current favourite Irek Mukhamedov (as Ivan, Spartacus, Boris) is outstanding, a massive physique elevated and manoevred with extraordinary ease and power. Deeply impressive, but this is more Olympic gold-medal stuff than dancing. □

CINEMA

Mix and match

Adam Mars-Jones

Pretty in Pink (15)
Plaza
Sugarbaby (15)
Cannon Tottenham Court Road, Everyman (from 22 August)

CRITICS ARE regularly accused of using sledgehammers to crack nuts; the trouble is that many of the cultural products to be assessed are so frail that they make the smallest jeweller's screwdriver from the critic's tool-box look like a blunt and brutal instrument.

Pretty In Pink is such an artefact. It tells the story of the romance between high-school classmates Andie (Molly Ringwald) and Blane (Andrew McCarthy). He's rich and she's poor. Her poverty is expressed by the cosmetic dents in her car; the answering machine in her bedroom is not, presumably, the most desirable model. Never mind that most teenagers in this country would kill for a car that moves and a private phone, even one without a memory. Surrender to what the press kit calls 'an emotional clash of cultures and values'.

He's shy and she's insecure. He shows his shyness by flinching whenever he comes across someone not demonstrably plutocratic. She betrays her insecurity by biting her lip much of the time, at a stylised diagonal. But, if they reach across the fabricated gulf between them, they might just make some synthetic contact.

Another aspect of Andie's poverty is that her mother has left her father. You might think from the film that parents were some sort of expensive social necessity, that someone who couldn't keep up payments on the pair was committing a social and economic faux pas. Oddly, although Andie is defined as parentally deprived, her father is the only parent we see in the whole movie. When you have two parents, apparently, they cancel each other out, leaving only the aura of affluence for their children to enjoy. Andie's father is played by Harry Dean Stanton and he's the only forgivable reason for seeing the film. If he's not careful he will end up redeeming so many fiascos that he will look out of place in a good film, but that is the risk a character actor takes.

The other token adult runs a record store and, despite her punky hair and bondage gear, turns out to look back on her high-school prom as life's big highlight. Since average weekly incomes in America have fallen by 14.3 per cent since 1973, this attitude might seem rooted in economic reality. But of course the message is that teenage — by a strange chance, the age of the most dedicated film audience — is the only real time of life. Romeo and Juliet might have agreed; but the gulf between them was not that he had an American Express Gold card and she had only the regular one.

The factors separating the lovers in **Sugarbaby** are horribly real: while he is a young, athletic and goodlooking train-driver on the underground, she is more than ten years older, more than ample in the flesh – she would make Rubens' women look like Giacometti's – and works at a funeral parlour. The fat and frumpy Marianne becomes obsessed with the train driver she takes home from work. She sets out to find him, then to seduce him, then to keep him.

The German director Percy Adlon is probably best known for his 1981 film about Proust's housekeeper, *Celeste*; *Sugarbaby*, for which he also wote the script, is his first film not drawn from existing material. He has devised a colour-scheme for the film that just avoids being irritating and overdetermined, starting from cold blues and greens and moving to fleshy and then ardent reds; sometimes he gives the images an expressionist tilt. All this stylising would slow the film down intolerably if the acting weren't naturalistic, and if it weren't so charmingly done.

Marianne Sagebrecht and Eisi Gulp are excellent as the principals. She makes no apologies for her unlikeliness as a romantic heroine and just gets on with the job of being more imaginative, more passionate, and simply more determined than her rival, a pretty wife fortuitously away for two weeks. He turns out to enjoy being looked after and catered for. It isn't hard to work out that they are playing mothers and sons, but with so much playfulness that the game stops being embarrassing. They take baths together, he gives her a ride on his motorbike, they dance a tango inside one of Marianne's dresses.

Andie (Molly Ringwald) smiles bravely despite her ansaphone's inadequacies

The camera, meanwhile, is claiming its own freedom from confinement. At the beginning of the film it follows the characters fairly doggedly but, as the lovers reach out for each other — or, more accurately, as she reaches out for them both — it begins to explore their surroundings in rhythmic swings. When they take their motorbike ride, the camera bounces merrily around them. By the time they go rock'n'roll dancing near the end of the film, the camera is positively jiving, with a manic animation that suggests an imminent collapse. The use of the camera in *Sugarbaby* is in splendid contrast to the normal style of romantic films, where the camera fixates on the lovers as if no clinch was complete without it.

A fat woman's obsession with a thin man could be filmed any number of ways: *Sugarbaby*'s achievement is to make it romantic as well as funny. In German romanticism, the grotesque is an aspect of the sublime; perhaps that has something to do with it. In *Sugarbaby* the laughter isn't disruptive but in a curious way celebratory.

Marianne in one of her speeches defends her occupation, pointing out that nurses see more death than gravediggers, but it's gravedigging that is felt to be the gruesome job. 'The dead aren't dirty,' she protests. 'They're just like us. They are us.' She speaks for everyone who is unfairly excluded from life and liveliness and she makes it clear that *Sugarbaby* is a test case for romanticism, not a parody of it. □

THEATRE

Production line

Victoria Radin

It isn't simply a shortage of cash that's draining the British theatre, but a concomitant failure of nerve

STEPPING INTO Benedict Nightingale's elegant shoes (I speak metaphorically) is, despite my previous incursions on these pages, an alarming task. For starters, there is that cream bun that lurked in the pocket of his antique mac ready for deployment against vengeful playwrights. Not everyone is capable of using a cream bun as a defensive weapon. Me, I couldn't handle it. For the moment I stand before you without material armaments.

I shall doubtless need something soon; like everything else in this benighted country, the theatre is thrashing about in a state of change, deprivation and anger. A few of the changes are potentially beneficial: Jonathan Miller will take over the Old Vic; John Dexter is carving a place for the classics in the West End; Kenneth Branagh, a young sometime RSC actor, is producing himself in Shakespeare (and why not?) at the Lyric, Hammersmith; and it now seems (though what this portends I don't

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know) that Richard Eyre and David Aukin will take over the running of the National Theatre. Best of all, black, brown and/or female voices are beginning to infiltrate the big arenas. I welcome them less in the interests of abstract justice than in anticipation of the threat they'll pose to a theatre that can seem at times to have become a series of variations on one hollow, if well-modulated, voice.

Two of the most obvious sinners are the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre and both are of course — though for the wrong reasons and by the wrong people — currently under attack. I had hoped to get an idea of what it feels like to be inside the big companies at *Not the RSC*, a two-week platform for debates, workshops and performances at the Almeida Theatre in Islington organised by, with and (as it sometimes seemed) *for* disenfranchised members of the RSC: in the main, its younger actors (though three dressers were among those who donated their services as directors or actors).

The star turn was *definitely* not the RSC: Vanessa and Corin Redgrave speaking, supposedly, on public subsidy. Anyone who has never seen the pair in their theoretically non-performing WRP roles should try to catch them somewhere. Displaying none of the charm of her stage or film portrayals, Ms Redgrave spoke for 15 minutes in a grave, throbbing voice and taped her brother's nearly hour-long disquisition on a conspiracy theory linking the High Court's over-ruling of Equity's instruction to members not to work in South Africa to Rupert Murdoch, the print workers, the *Sunday Times* attacks on Peter Hall and Trevor Nunn, the impending economic crash and other matters.

These were all leading to a blitzkrieg, or Mrs Thatcher's intended 'privatisation' of the arts, against which we were exhorted to join with all trades unions in a General Strike. Although most people at the Almeida were in sympathy with the main issues, the pair's daemonic terminology and pedantic display of facts for facts' sake, combined with an appearance of massive certainty, initially silenced participation in what was never going to become Vanessa's declared objective of a 'creative debate'. The Redgraves had accomplished the hardly plausible mission of allying themselves uncritically to Hall and Nunn in the service of an impending revolution.

What ails our theatre is not merely lack of subsidy, or money, but courage. The Festival's first debate, on directing, at least got near suggesting what everyone knows but isn't telling: that our theatre lacks directors of vision. Why don't we have brilliant monsters like Peter Stein, Ariane Mnouchkine, Patrice Chéreau, Giorgio Strehler or even our own Peter Brook? Someone from the floor suggested that ours is the age of the 'director-manager', an administrator dedicated to efficiency and cutting costs. Paul Marcus, an assistant director at the RSC, called productions there a series of 'bottle jobs', executed without sufficient preparation in a climate which venerates 'product' — witness the RSC's receipt of the Queen's Award to Industry.

Sarah Pia Anderson, a freelance director, spoke of our isolation from continental theatre and deplored the lack of 'female spirit', or looseness and anarchy. But it was left to an American woman in the audience to offer a practical explanation for what someone else described as 'hours and hours of waiting for something to happen on stage': in the current way of things, directors, just like everyone else, are protecting their emotions by going for concepts rather than feelings.

I feel, too, that our companies might do well to commission work from non-dramatic writers. *Little Women, Big Boys*, a short Festival piece by Carol Ann Duffy, a poet who's been persuaded into playwriting, offers a new handle on the weary situation of missile-guarding soldiers and their female opponents. Except for the last (and least successful) protester, the trio played by Pauline Moran (quick-changing in a bender) actually have sympathy for men and soldiers, which doesn't qualify their wit. Like the best dramatists — and surely the best debaters — Ms Duffy opens a chink of light into a large question without supplying ready answers. Directed by Sarah Pia Anderson, the play is repeated at the Almeida this Saturday and, I hope, will have a longer life. □

TELEVISION

Soliciting

Peter Hillmore

A HIT, a palpable hit. A fortnight ago, when I wrote that television's obsession with entertainment was all-powerful and that current affairs didn't even come second (that position is surely held by sport), I didn't expect the current affairs people to be particularly pleased. Especially the ones who now run the entertainment section. So I was delighted by the angry letter last week from David Elstein, Thames's Director of Programmes.

I'm sorry that I mixed up the change of names: *TV Eye* is becoming *This Week*. But, however many staff changes Mr Elstein makes on the programme, my essential point remains: he is not increasing the actual number of current affairs programmes on the ITV channel he runs. Even if he wanted to, the other television companies probably wouldn't agree and, without a network showing, there just isn't the finance.

I'm also sorry that I said his main concern would now be scheduling *Minder*, when he writes that the company stopped making it two years ago. I should have said repeats of *Minder* (or even tired repeats of *The New Avengers*, made ten years ago, and shown again last Monday). But credit to Mr Elstein and the other schedulers for putting out **Scales of Justice** (Thames) at peak time. Last week's programme on solicitors showed a group of law students positively salivating at the financial rewards as a lecturer explained how to get round the Rent Act. It was clear that they hoped to work for landlords rather than tenants. You could see why: there was an international solicitor talking about his jet flights around the world, and the £100,000 a year rewards, if the former are your clients. And there was a harassed looking lawyer touring Manchester housing estates on a motorbike looking after the tenants. But, shortly after we were all fired by the dedication of the law centre zealots, Hazel O'Connor, in the drama series **Fighting Back** (BBC1), raised a few doubts by sneering at solicitors who wore track suits to the law centre and three-piece suits to their real practices. I expect it was unfair, but it was a point worth making.

I was surprised to learn from his letter that LWT's John Birt was not interested in running Channel 4; during my mercifully brief period at the company, he was on the very short list, and interviewed.

Still, that's enough of current affairs; if the companies can ignore them in the summer, so can I. There's nothing wrong with good entertainment. I once interviewed a man specialising in audience research and he was saying how difficult it is to lay down ground rules — while you can reasonably assume that a *Times* reader doesn't, by and large, read the *Sun*, a person who watches *This Week/TV Eye* devotedly every week is also quite likely to watch *Miami Vice* (as proof, I can exclusively reveal, as we say in the trade, that the favourite programme of the editor of the Oxford Dictionaries used to be *The Professionals*: I know because he once told me so, without any embarrassment).

The best entertainment — not the same as the best programme — on the box at the moment is the **Sherlock Holmes** series (ITV). I don't think I have suspended disbelief more willingly and the huge gaps in the plots are beautifully spliced over with menacing music so you don't really notice them. Why, even the solicitors are presented as well meaning and bumbling as they approach Mr Holmes for help. They may be earning 100,000 guineas a year, but they want Justice.

The lawyers in **Dynasty** (BBC1) are pretty good as well and act true to type. They don't care about Justice, just money, and act as though they earn 100,000 dollars merely from picking up the telephone. If Winston Churchill's Bill on television obscenity had become law, I expect the City would have demanded that *Dynasty* be taken off the air. It certainly presents big business in a very bad light. Even the caring, compassionate Blake Carrington is revealed to be less than noble in his personal and business life. Nobody is aloof from dastardly behaviour. Krystle is bound to betray her family in a later episode. I'd never realised that producer Aaron Spelling was a closet revolutionary until now. □

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Disabled

Naseem Khan

JUST ABOUT NOW, if things had been going to plan, one of the most prestigious and effective conferences of the year should have been moving into top gear for its final planning stages. Instead, the whole costly structure has been ignominiously called off.

To the outsider, the issue could seem baffling. Here was a high-powered conference on Disability and the Arts. It was the follow-up to the weighty, wide-ranging Attenborough Report on the same subject (Work in Progress 14 June 1985) and was designed to lobby, attack, educate and convert policy-makers, enlisting their support in implementing Attenborough's recommendations. Yet the conference has been scuppered by the very people it thought it would benefit: people with disabilities.

The aftermath is like a stretch of sea where a big ship has gone down. As far as the eye can see bob bits of debris: recriminations, counter-accusations, bitterness. On one side are the conference organisers, the Carnegie Council for the Arts and Disabled People (an *ad hoc* body set up by the Carnegie UK Trust to ensure that the Report didn't simply gather dust on a shelf). On the other, there's a combination of grassroots organisations: at the forefront, the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People (the conference was to have been held in Manchester), vigorously backed by the newish British Council of Organisations of Disabled People (BCODP); in the van, supporters like the Graeae Theatre Company.

Possible progress, claims the Carnegie Council (or would, if it had not decided to keep officially quiet), has irresponsibly been dashed to the ground. The reasons for this can be best understood by taking a step sideways, to Deptford's Albany Empire where, recently, well over 100 people attended a day entitled 'Disability — our Arts, Our Culture!' whose highlight was a staged debate on whether there was a need for a Disability Arts Forum.

Kevin Mulhern argued for such a body. It would in essence be a sharing of direct experience in order to effect change from a basis of knowledge. 'It will give us the strength to challenge and find a place in society we wish to have.' Rudi Breakwell-Bos half-heartedly put the opposite case: that the arts would suffer from 'over-politicisation', that a Forum would make the disabled a political football.

What followed was not so much a discussion as, in the way of such things, a series of statements. Segregation was dealt with summarily: in the women's movement 'chosen segregation has led to strength'. The able-bodied came in for stick both from the Chair ('We have to be very careful doing things with able-bodied people, that they don't take over — which is their natural behaviour pattern') and the floor, where they were told that they should not participate in the debate. The disabled, said Vic Finkelstein, should 'create our own culture'. He was backed by artist Kirsten Hearn ('a raving blind Lesbian and really proud of it') who cited pressure on disabled people to pretend in their arts that they were, as she put it, 'normal'. Others resisted the term 'disabled' (though since they described themselves throughout as 'disabled people' I have followed suit). 'I'm disbled — as far as the outside world is concerned,' said sculptor Adam Reynolds, a sufferer from muscular dystrophy. 'All of us,' said Chair Rachel Hirst, 'have different impairments, but we share the "disability" that society thrusts on us.'

The core of the issue, however, is control, which brings us back to Artability and Carnegie. The clearest emotion to emerge at Deptford was long-held resentment: at being patronised, marginalised, depowered, spoken for, controlled. The first criticism made of Artability by both Bernard Leach of the Manchester Coalition and Anne Rae of the BCODP was lack of any significant representation of disabled people in its planning. (Carnegie would claim constant consultation and some representation.) Second, the protesters dislike what they see as an over-emphasis on the agenda of the arts as therapy, as well as the overwhelming presence of able-bodied 'experts' as speakers. Third, they resent the choice of Manchester's Palace Theatre for an opening day of entertainment by artists with disabilities, since the Palace is one of Britain's (many) inaccessible venues. Fourth, they claim that the price (£65 for a 3-day residential conference, or £40 unwaged) would put it beyond the means of the people it is meant to be considering. But they never, insist both Leach and Rae strenuously, asked Carnegie to *drop* the conference: 'The whole thing is utterly bizarre.' All they wanted was to have their points met. If it had gone ahead they would have 'leafletted' the conference. (How, say the other side, could they have walked through a picket line of wheelchairs?)

Despite the efforts of some, battle lines seem to be too firmly drawn at present to retrieve the conference. But it should be stressed that, beneath all the intemperance at Deptford (and sloganising that will be familiar to anyone with the slightest acquaintance with either feminist or Black politics), there remained a high degree of articulateness and sensible thought. Carnegie, whose conference acted as catalyst for the Disability Arts Forum, might, if passions cool, find its hand strengthened by a development that, paradoxically, now looks like being the major achievement of Artability. □

Next week: Carnival — and Perpetual Beauty.

MUSIC

Sun, sand and sheep

Andrew Clements

Summerscope
South Bank until 31 August

BY FAR THE WORST thing about the South Bank's new alternative to the proms is its title. At least South Bank Summer Music, the GLC's season, had an accurate and descriptive label, but Summerscope suggests nothing specific, certainly not the characterful mixture of events that shelters under its umbrella until the end of the month. Like SBSM, Summerscope has a presiding artistic eminence, now Michael Vyner who runs the London Sinfonietta. It's not surprising then that the Sinfonietta and its theatrical sibling Opera Factory bulk large in the programming and that it is designed as a celebration of 20th-century music in a variety of manifestations.

As somebody who has clamoured for more 20th-century music to be played on the South Bank, and for audiences to be enticed into sampling what living composers have to say, it might seem strange for me to raise only a half-hearted cheer for the scope of Summerscope. But, as the Sinfonietta goes from strength to strength and its following burgeons, I'm beginning to acquire a slight resistance to its essentially partial view of what is happening in new music. Because of the excellence of the band's performances and the astute flair of Vyner's promotion there is the feeling abroad that the Sinfonietta *is* contemporary music, whereas the reality could be that its horizons have become limited, the music included in its own concerts confined to a select subset of the century's leading figures.

Of course there is more to the current Summerscope than the Sinfonietta. There has been a pair of concerts by the chic American Kronos Quartet, whose exhilarating performances are not always lavished on the best music, a series devoted to the string quartet in the 20th century, song recitals, dance groups, puppets, jazz and folk groups; it's altogether an attractive blend, well-studded with choiceties. I just wish it was less predictable and that the Sinfonietta imprimatur had been less heavily applied.

In terms of the future of the South Bank complex, the most significant element of the season is Opera Factory's residence in the Elizabeth Hall. The South Bank Board's intention is to make at least the two smaller halls more flexible, and able to accommodate not only music theatre more comfortably but also electro-acoustic events with a minimum of stress. The electronic installations are still at the early planning stage, but some of the modifications to the QEH were finished in time for Opera Factory production of *Cosi fan tutte* and the premiere of Birtwistle's

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'mechanical pastoral' *Yan, Tan, Tethera*. At the cost of some 350 seats the stage area in the hall can be more than doubled, while a new lighting grid makes a vast improvement to the theatrical possibilities. Siting an orchestra of any size is clearly a problem: for *Cosi* it was placed to the right of the action, for *Yan, Tan Tethera* behind a gauze at the back of the stage. In both cases contact between singers and conductor requires strategically positioned TV monitors and there were problems of coordination in both operas.

By now Opera Factory's cheerful style, in which theatrical impact is at least as important as musical excellence, has become almost cosily familiar. After the new depths plumbed in Nigel Osborne's *Hell's Angels* at the Royal Court at the beginning of the year, the *Cosi*, sharply characterised, penetratingly funny, provided urgently needed redemption. I can't pretend that the singing was consistently up to scratch, though the Fiordiligi of Marie Angel, living on her nerves, chain-smoking, totally lacking in sophistication, was a painfully credible portrait in which musical performance and dramatic flair were equal partners. The other principals did not always get the balance so exact. Setting *Cosi* on a beach somewhere in the Mediterranean among the idle rich has its problems, but after a sequence of tirelessly faithful and fundamentally dull productions — why is it such a popular opera at present? — it emerged both lively and imaginative.

With premieres of a major orchestral work (*Earth Dances*, to be repeated at the Proms at the end of the month) and of *The Mask of Orpheus* already this year, Harrison Birtwistle seems to dominate British music at present. Unlike *Orpheus, Yan, Tan, Tethera* is a recent piece, written in 1984 for BBC television who promptly rejected the completed score. It's based on a Wiltshire folk tale of rivalry between two shepherds, one 'come down from t'North' who counts his sheep according to the Northern dialect — 'yan, tan, tethera, methera . . .' and a local man who sees his neighbour's flock increasing while his own gets smaller, and invokes black magic to gain revenge.

Birtwistle's way of fleshing out folk tales, never cosmetic or sentimental, is marvellously direct. He sets Tony Harrison's text with an almost primitive rawness, constructing a tension between the vocal lines and the intricately worked instrumental writing that is compelling. A firm judgment on the dramatic effectiveness of the work must wait, at least until Channel 4 screens its recording, for David Freeman's Opera Factory production favoured a kind of naturalism that went right against the grain of Birtwistle's carefully prescribed stylisation. The work should operate according to machine-like rituals and, without such a discipline, it leaves too many loose ends. □

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To take a good look

John Spurling

Beauty's in the eye of the beholder . . . Britain isn't a visual nation . . . these and other assumptions are wobbled by the latest selection of art books

JACQUES MAQUET'S **The Aesthetic Experience** (Yale, £27) has an exceptionally ugly cover and an off-putting subtitle. 'An Anthropologist Looks at the Visual Arts' may be an accurate description, but it sounds both heavy and marginal.

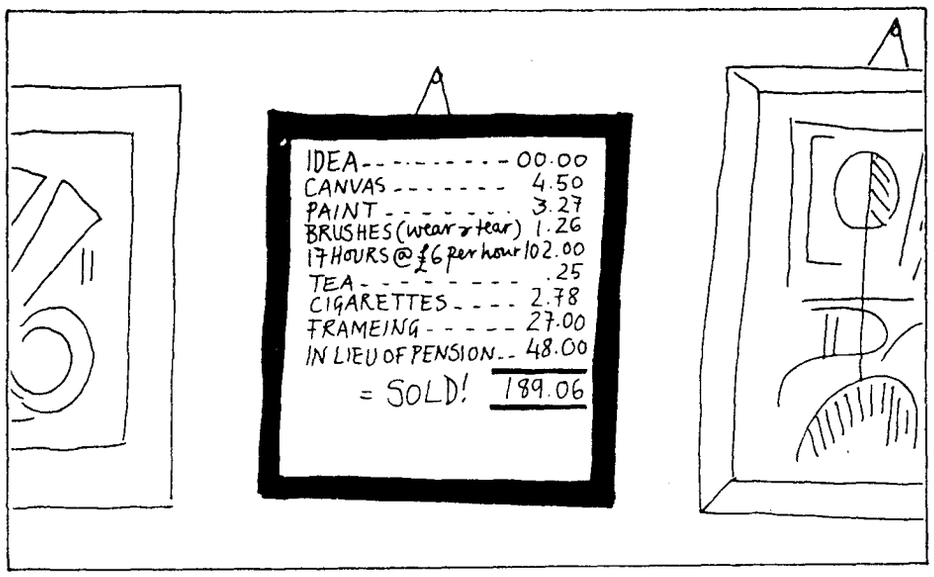
The book is quite the opposite and should become a classic once the publishers have issued it in a cheaper format and changed the cover. Maquet is indeed a professor of anthropology, a doctor of several other disciplines, too, but his best qualification is that he looks and thinks hard before he writes. He emerges as a modest and sympathetic man with a very clear mind, whose anthropological expertise is employed as an instrument in his inquiry, not as a way of reducing art to more easily measurable dimensions.

The inquiry itself is ambitious and wide-ranging, an attempt to assess and explain the nature of the aesthetic experience in all its different manifestations, at all times and in all places up to the present day. Professor Maquet distinguishes four ways in which the individual consciousness approaches the world — by acting, knowing, feeling or contemplating — and he argues that the aesthetic experience is essentially a form of contemplation. It is because the Western tradition has been mainly concerned with knowing and feeling that we have always found it so hard to pin down the aesthetic experience and have tended either to assign it more workaday uses, such as communication or political and moral propaganda, or to write it off as pure pleasure: art for art's sake.

An art object may indeed be put to these and other uses, but to see the aesthetic experience as fulfilling a human need which we otherwise hardly recognise in our culture is to give it a value independent both of the art object's ostensible content and of the desire to possess it. Maquet locates the source of this value in the organisation and formal qualities of an art object and thus endorses, on the whole, the notion that what has grown to be recognised as worth contemplating (the 'Mona Lisa' or a Benin bronze) is so not because experts have said so, but because the necessary qualities are constant. In other words, you can put a pile of bricks (though Maquet doesn't use this example) down in a corner of a museum and make it thereby an art object (because it is putatively 'framed'), but you cannot by that act alone turn it into an aesthetic experience.

This is a fascinating and absorbing book, from which I have picked out and probably travestied only one line of argument, but which illuminates almost every aspect of its subject. Maquet is as good on the curiously similar anti-modernist cultural policies of the Soviet and Nazi governments as he is on the differences between the art of Byzantine and Latin Christianity and on the question of personal preferences in the viewer: based, he maintains, not on differences of aesthetic quality, but on the symbolic meaning of the object. I warmly recommend *The Aesthetic Experience* to anyone who has ever stopped to look at a work of art and wondered why.

Only a tithe of the paintings covered by E. D. H. Johnson **Paintings of the British Social Scene** (Weidenfeld, £20) could be described as having much aesthetic quality. Nevertheless, although Professor Johnson is a rather slow read after Professor Maquet and is prone, like many of the artists he discusses, to lean too much on mere description, he does succeed in discovering, or at least codifying, a tradition in British art which has hardly been seen as such before. We may know about Hogarth, about 18th-century conversation pieces and domestic portraiture (Gainsborough's 'Mr and Mrs Andrews', for example), about the British genre painters such as Morland and Wilkie who flourished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just at the time when British collectors were mad about 17th-century Dutch genre painting and about the Victorian narrative painters who drew eager crowds to the RA, but we know about them as separate outcrops. Johnson presents them as all one range of hills, running from Hogarth and the rise of the British print to Sickert. It is a convincing and pleasing thesis, refuting the cliché that the British have never been a visual nation by showing that they have been perfectly prepared to be visual provided that could have a story at the same time. Johnson mysteriously omits Elizabeth Thompson, one of the best and most popular storyteller artists of the Victorian period, and his avoidance of comparisons with the art of other countries makes this his 'lost' tradition look stronger and less provincial than it really was, but this is a timely book since I suspect that the tradition, which didn't really end with Sickert (what about Munnings, Lowry, Carel Weight?) is just perking up again in the work of some of our youngest 'New Image' artists.

Tony Godfrey's **The New Image** (Phaidon, £19.95) is a premature and superficial account of what is still most succinctly referred to as 'Bad Painting'. Godfrey makes a few arbitrary value judgments but is mainly concerned with supplying an instant guide, country by country, to the international artworld jet-set of the Eighties. The outcome is a sow's purse.

The Paintings of Benjamin West by Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley (Yale, £50) and **Velásquez** by Jonathan Brown (Yale, £35) are both weighty, academic tomes, magnificently illustrated. The West book suffers from being too grand a vehicle for too dull an artist, but, although Professor Brown cannot help letting Velásquez appear singularly unappealing as a man, he is excellent at analysing his incomparable and innovatory technique as a painter. If ever art objects were made for prolonged contemplation they were surely those from the hand of this miserable minor official at the court of King Philip IV. □

Marianne Kolbuszewski

Mods and rockers

Boyd Tonkin

The Revenge of the Philistines: Art and Culture 1972-1984
HILTON KRAMER *Secker* £12.50

CISATLANTIC HACKS can only gaze with envy at New York critics' ability to load their collected reviews into fat volumes with show-stopping titles. 'Revenge of the Philistines', indeed. We should be so lucky.

For most of the period covered here, Hilton Kramer wrote as chief art critic of the *New York Times*, later leaving to edit the *New Criterion*. In reprinted reviews and the odd longer essay, he discusses new art, retrospective exhibitions, photography, museum policy and critical debate. For newspaper journalism written to a twice or thrice-weekly deadline, Kramer's 85 pieces maintain an astonishingly high standard — far higher than anything achieved by his British peers in the visual arts. In its way, the book is a tribute not just to its author's Stakhanovite productivity but also to the huge rag slab of the *NYT*.

He often makes you crave to see the work of painters and sculptors unknown over here. With more familiar names, his manner is swift and unforgettable. On David Hockney's light, for instance: 'a turned-up, synthetic clarity we recognise as the light of our time and no other — a light compounded, in about equal parts, of psychological candor and improved technology.'

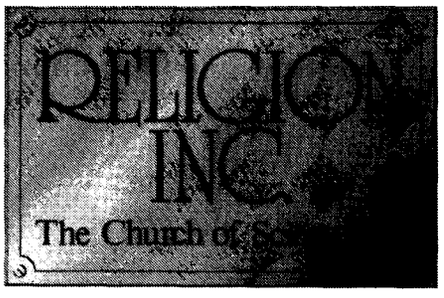
Kramer comes to dismiss Hockney's output as 'a kind of nineteenth-century Salon art refurbished from the stockroom of modernism'. This assessment takes us to the heart of his commitments and aversions. His voice belongs to a Conservative High Modernism. In brief, Kramer believes that a benign conjunction of great museums, private patronage and the commercial gallery system in the US (for 'America' read 'Manhattan') has nurtured a brood of major talents in the 40 years that separate the emergence of Jackson Pollock and of Julian Schnabel. 'Like partners in a stormy but enduring marriage, the avant-garde and the bourgeoisie come more and more to depend on each other and even to resemble each other.'

Open-eyed and disabused, Kramer still finds this wedlock worth preserving. When threatened by exhibitions of anti-nuclear or anti-imperialist agit-prop, he retreats into high-minded bluster: 'President Reagan and his policies may be the immediate object of attack, but the more fundamental one is the idea of art itself.' His targets, of course, might well agree.

Assaulted from the other flank, he replies to a loopy Harvard free marketeer who wants to sell off museum pictures to the rich (and replace them with reproductions!) with a commanding defence of the right of public access. So the line he holds is thin, but clear enough: great art for the people, but leave your non-aesthetic convictions in the cloakroom.

In taking their revenge on a now canonical abstraction and formalism, Kramer suggests, the 'philistines' of the Seventies chose as their chief weapon the range of artistic practices often labelled as 'Postmodernism'. In most accounts, this movement's founding moments during the mid-Sixties include the rise of Andy Warhol and other Pop artists; the gradual return of realist and figurative painting; the architecture of populism and pastiche that followed Robert Venturi's manifesto *Learning from Las Vegas* and, in criticism, the celebration of kitsch and frivolity announced by Susan Sontag's *Notes on Camp*. Kramer claims that, 'In the strange new world of postmodernist culture, political radicals and aesthetic reactionaries often find themselves allied against a common enemy: that mainstream modernism that has now become so deeply integrated into the cultural life of the middle class.'

In Kramer's eyes, postmodernism is nothing if not user-friendly. The art that likes



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to say Yes, it affirms through imagery, tone and form the all-pervasive *bonhomie* of a data-saturated consumer society. Conscious of living at the terminus of history, it doesn't resist modernism, but gulps it down as one among a multitude of available modes and strategies. In olden days a glimpse of Pollock was looked on as something shocking; now, heaven knows, anything goes. High modernism proclaimed a new world of perception, and set out to create it. Warhol's Coke-bottle in hand, postmodernism sits back and watches that world go by. Modernism demanded: 'You must change your life.' Postmodernism responds: 'Have a nice day!'

Faced with an open challenge to his modern pantheon, from Cézanne to Rothko, Kramer waxes lyrical in defence and indignant in attack. But offer him distinctively post-modern work without the occasion to strike a theoretical pose and he can be a receptive witness. So let's finish with a brilliant and definitive essay on the *New Yorker* cartoonist Saul Steinberg. Steinberg exudes the spirit of 'sweet parody' and laid-back allusive wit that suffuses the art of the post-modern city, where 'the kitschiest product of cynical commerce and vulgar sentiment turns out to be the distant, disinherited offspring of a once exalted artistic style . . . In the Steinbergian world, there is *no thing-in-itself, no* 'reality' independent of the modes of its perception. Nature, Fourteenth Street, his own drawing table — nothing is free to be itself, for everything is tethered to the forms that culture, high or low or some combination of the two, have imposed on it.' □

Swiss roles

Nicholas Jacobs

Mountain of Truth: The Counterculture Begins, Ascona, 1900-1920
MARTIN GREEN *New England* £17

YOU MIGHT CALL THEM the grandparents of our 'counter culture', those of whom this book is a sustained and sober celebration.

Ascona was a village at the northern end of Lake Maggiore in Italian Switzerland, where, as Martin Green puts it, the triumphant technological North stops and the backward peasant South begins; or, in the writer Emil Ludwig's words 'where birch and olive come together'. It was never meant to be a Utopia. The counterculture for which it came to stand was not an alternative society; it was an assertion of individual, but not necessarily individualistic, human nature against the scientism of industrial and mass civilisation — a place where Suzanne Perrottet, the founder of psychodrama, was taught by Rudolf Laban, one of the founders of modern dance, 'to find her own middle C', so that she could sing with others 'as uncoordinatedly as the birds in the forest'. It was, among other things, an anarchist centre, a place of nature cures and a vegetarian Mecca; and, as movement and dance are the most primitive and direct form of human expression, it was perhaps above all the origin and home of modern dance — a place where the emphasis was put on 'body knowledge'.

Martin Green starts his book with full-length portaits of three outstanding Asconans (it is typical of Ascona that they hardly ever met): the heretic psychoanalyst Otto Gross; Rudolf Laban; the poet and vagabond Gusto Gräser.

In *The Von Richthofen Sisters,* published in 1974, Green has already given an account of the extraordinary Otto Gross, one of Frieda Lawrence (née Richthofen)'s lovers. His short explosive life is told again here, with additional information, particularly about his forbidding father Hanns, the founder of 'scientific' criminology, whose lectures Kafka, later a friend of Otto's, attended in Prague. Otto Gross was squabbled over as a patient by Freud and Jung (and subsequently excised from the psychoanalytic literature).

In his sympathetic commitment to the internal world of his patients and his increasing radicalisation, it is tempting to compare Gross with the R. D. Laing of the Sixties, but Gross took things much further. So much did he encourage his patients to 'live out' their fantasies that he seems to have been responsible for procuring the poison by which two of them killed themselves and he tried to forge a direct link between the unconscious and political revolution. Nevertheless, Freud once called him 'one of the only truly original minds' among his followers (the other was Jung) and Green has a fine defence of Gross as 'the wounded surgeon', possessing 'a purity of moral strength that derived from his being as sick as those he prescribed for'. This may be over generous, but, after so much neglect, seems deserved. Green also follows up convincingly Gross's possible influence on Kafka and D. H. Lawrence.

Gusto Gräser was what the Germans call a *Naturmensch*, for which Green can find no English equivalent. This, he stresses, results from Ascona being a mainly German phenomenon: 'the iron cage weighed heaviest' — industrialisation, for instance, was faster and more savage — 'and the fight against it was fiercest, in Germany.' Gräser shunned the human-made environment and made shelters for himself and his family in the woods. Hermann Hesse's over-intellectualised boyhood meant that he was strongly drawn towards Gräser in Ascona as an example of the natural life. But Gräser was not the guru type and Hesse's literary ambitions were incompatible with vagabondage. However, Gräser did have an influence on the most unexpected people — not only the left-wing anarchist Erich Mühsam, but the German socialist novelist Theodor Plievier and the poet Johannes R. Becher, one time DDR Minister of Culture — and Green also relates and compares his ideas with those of the German Green Party.

Laban is better known here than Gross and Gräser, if only for his work at Dartington Hall and for his books on dance and movement notation. Green explains the attraction of his dissonant, expressive dance ideas in contrast to his predecessor, the French Emile Jacques Dalcroze, whose emphasis was on rhythm and harmony. One of Laban's key pupils was Mary Wigman, who broke away from him in 1919. Green shows how she developed after Laban, and compares her — through contemporary accounts — with Isadora Duncan and the more Dalcrozean Suzanne Perrottet.

Martin Green's sane commitment to the idea of Ascona, summed up in his concluding words — 'even thinkers are human, and must think with their whole bodies' and 'the Truth is to be grasped from some very odd angles' — has inspired him to explore its sources and its impact far beyond Gross, Gräser, Laban and Wigman. His book therefore contains much rich material on German Tolstoyism, Nietzschean Anarchism, on Gandhiism and Theosophy and on the influence of Ascona on writers like Hesse, Lawrence, Franz Werfel and Blaise Cendrars, as well as on German Expressionism, the Dada movement and the Munich Revolution of 1919. He is also scrupulously careful to point to the dangerous elements (Laban's racism, for example) and the general irrationalism of Ascona which meant that some of its ideas coincided with those of the Nazis, whose rise began precisely as Ascona faded away. □

Brat

John Gurney

How dim I seem, a simplified cartoon,
this winter night. I mutter, 'God is dead!'
then stare up at the pale noun of the moon
that slips across the terrace. Overhead
the dark clouds pile like swarf, unglorified,
old grindings, filings, turnings. Drift across
the midnight of the city. Rarified,
some hang now like God's spectre, like his loss,
the presence of his absence. Now I hear
the mail train, heading northwards, echoing
through the slate streets. Now all my world appears
like something stripped of essence, suffering
the preface to its death. Begins to fade
like something unsubstantial, made of shade.

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FICTION

Ghost story

Gillian Wilce

An Academic Question
BARBARA PYM *Macmillan* £9.95

THE QUESTION about the publication of this novel six years after is author's death is, why?

Barbara Pym herself never bothered to finish it; she abandoned it in favour of *Quartet in Autumn*. Now, two full-length drafts and some notes have been amalgamated by her friend and literary executor Hazel Holt — in whose judgment, it should be said, Barbara Pym had every faith; witness her letters.

The joinery has been skilful enough. The result has a distinctly Pymish tone, particularly in the characteristically naive but knowingly observant voice of narrator Caroline, wife of boringly self-centred university lecturer Alan. There are recognisably Pym characters, like Coco, a most unlikely academic, and his mother Kitty, still wistful for white West Indian society and obsessed with style and appearance. Typically, they seem to bring a touch of hopeful glamour to Caro's life only to fail her at a moment of small crisis. But there's also an air of unreality about it, as if the characters had been transposed into the wrong environment. It's rather like one of those *NS* comps: imagine Archers people in Dallas; imagine Pym people in a redbrick university at a time of student unrest. The students hardly exist, are peripheral to the main matter of minor academic wrangling (about which Pym is convincing). The social worker sister from London remains a stereotype. And the child (Caro has one child, no work and a full-time live-in au pair — was that really likely?) is characterless.

In sum, the book, though by no means bad, is a shadow of Pym's best work; which brings us back to the questions. If a new reader started here would they want to go on? Is it a service to a writer to publish everything they ever wrote? If there are writers so fascinating that their very shopping lists merit publication (personally I doubt it) has Barbara Pym a talent of that sprawling, unpredictable, generous kind? Would this manuscript have been published if submitted by A. Unknown of Hounslow? We know it wouldn't have been published if submitted by B. Pym in 1970. Is it actually worth the standard £10 that novels seem to cost now? Would Barbara Pym have been pleased to see it in print? We have to take the word of Hazel Holt, who knew her well, on that one and I can imagine that she might have continued to relish the paradox that she who was not always taken seriously when alive should be so sought-after dead.

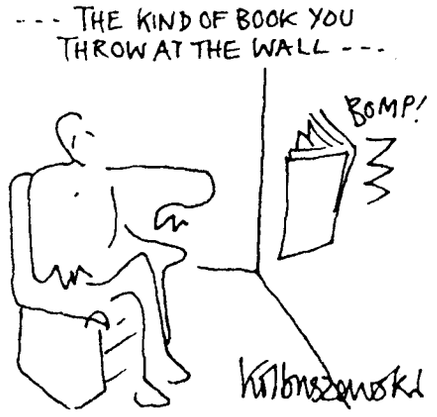
However, as an admirer of her neat, sometimes pained, dryly amused vignettes of Anglican-flavoured English life (there is Pym territory as surely as there is Greeneland, even if it is a distinctly circumscribed country), I cannot help wondering about the wisdom of a publishing a minor, unfinished, not wholly satisfying novel of hers now. Is it just cashing in, or is it a possibly mistaken desire to make up to her for the lost years? □

CRIME

Cobraphilia

Nick Kimberley

THE MECHANICS of fictional detection can be likened to the mechanics of novel-writing itself. The detective plays the omnipotent novelist, pulling together the strands of the puzzle to make a coherent narrative. Despite half a century in which the



Marianne Kolbuszewski

novel has constantly fought the limitations of its form, the whodunnit still relies on rigid convention: order reigns, to be disrupted by the crime, at whose heart is a mystery. Detective solves mystery, order is restored.

Intriguing, then, to discover a novel from crime fiction's Golden Age, Cameron McCabe's **The Face on the Cutting-Room Floor** (Penguin, £3.95, originally published in 1937) which plays with the restrictions of the whodunnit, eventually abandoning them as inadequate. The murder which leads to the title is investigated by both the police and the narrator, whose name is Cameron McCabe. The police detective, Smith, and McCabe might be two halves of the same personality, each pursuing the other towards annihilation. The solution to the mystery provides no resolution, merely opens up possibilities for more murder.

The novel closes with an eipitaph to 'Cameron McCabe' and his narrative. Various contemporary critics of crime fiction are called into service as if they had been writing about what we have just read. Witty perceptions into the nature and limits of detective fiction lead to more twists in the plot. In an edition of the novel published by Digit Books some 25 years ago, the twists move in an entirely different direction, a fact not noted here in an Afterword (written in 1981) revealing Cameron McCabe's identity. His 'real' life is almost as fantastic a fabrication as his novel, which finally has nothing but scorn for crime fiction.

For all its cynicism, *The Face on the Cutting-Room Floor*, written in a sort of pidgin hardboiled, remains not only an unsettling elaboration of the idea of detective as omnipotent creator, but also a contemplation of the narcissism of obsessive love. Beside it, the amibitions of most crime novels seem paltry.

McCabe's novel is a sort of narrative-producing machine, endlessly feeding off itself. The idea of stories producing more stories is reduced to numbing obviousness in Anne Hart's **The Life and Times of Miss Jane Marple** (Macmillan, £8.95), which synthesises Agatha Christie's Marple oeuvre into one sham biography. This isn't the first time that a fictional character has been reconstructed as if real, but the literal mind which Hart brings to her book allows only empty celebration. Christie is reproduced without question. Can even the most ardent fan care about the different delivery boys employed by St Mary Mead's fishmonger over the years? Can that same fan fail to spot that both Hart and Christie turn their noses up at anything new (understood to be distinctly lower-class) which threatens the power of the town's ossified social stratum?

In general, British police stories lack the ambivalence of their American or European counterparts, but, in **The Lolita Man** (Constable, £8.95), Bill James presents a police force of Masons, adulterers and other reprobates. The novel opens with a police radio blurting out its messages over a bed in which its owner is having an illicit bunk-up. Later, the same policeman observes, 'A cop could come to resemble his quarry, the relationship was so close' — nothing new in an America full of Dirty Harries, but refreshing from a Bobby. True, the novel reiterates ideas about rape as a crime perpetrated only by madmen, while council estates (named in this instance after Nye Bevin: for shame!) harbour criminal types in contrast to the products of 'decent schools'. But, for daring to suggest self-doubt in a policeman, *The Lolita Man* deserves attention.

Andrew H. Vachss is an American lawyer specialising in juvenile delinquency and child abuse. That should lend authority to his first novel, **Flood** (Collins, £10.95/Pan, £2.50), about a man nicknamed Cobra who specialises in sodomising children. Sadly, Vachss allows his righteous anger to run away with him. The world he describes is a humourless caricature: the city as jungle; the solitary hero routing evil with an iron discipline born of experience as a convict and mercenary. His people, like his dogs, react instinctively to stimuli: no time here for thought, talk, or rational behaviour. The novel orchestrates genuine anxieties — about violence, the break-up of the family, the lack of care, and of caring — into an unpleasant survivalism: if you want to get by out there, you'd better carry a knife and a few grenades. Burke, the hero, has built a world which no outsider can penetrate. You end up thinking he's the one who's deranged, not the Cobra.

Paranoid visions of urban decay are a staple of modern crime fiction: Vachss' utterly nasty novel offers no hope for social being; in this pyschotic world, it's kill or be killed. □

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LETTERS

Cover-up on the spy trail

Duncan Campbell, New Statesman

The *New Statesman* has published one article (25 July) and a series of letters about the alleged spying activities of civil servant Brian Gentleman — and the methods that the Channel 4 series *20/20 Vision* used to expose him. Recent letters from the programme-makers and their colleagues suggested that the *NS* missed 'the real story' by focusing on the programme's journalistic methods — instead of on how MI5 is 'once again engaged in a cover-up'.

They claim that *NS* and its writers have taken up cudgels on behalf of MI5, and joined in an orchestrated Security Service cover-up of its incompetence.

There are three problems with this line of argument. The first is the unprecedented extent of wet-eyed hilarity the suggestion of an alliance with the *NS* would create inside MI5 headquarters. The second problem is that there no evidence of incompetence for MI5 to cover up, since *20/20 Vision* could not corroborate their espionage charge. Thirdly, on this occasion there is no evidence of an official cover-up in action.

Last month, the *NS* repeatedly asked *20/20 Vision* for any evidence that MI5 *had* intervened to prevent Gentleman being prosecuted. They acknowledged that there was no evidence — save the obvious disinterest that the Special Branch had very quickly expressed about the 'spy' catch which *20/20 Vision* brought to them. But such behaviour may point equally to the questionable value of the evidence — which consisted in its entirety of a confession that TV researchers had won from Gentleman, after six months of hospitality and questioning of an admittedly weak, lonely and vulnerable man.

In accusing the *NS* of swapping sides, *20/20 Vision* has sidestepped two critical issues. They say that their original informant about Gentleman — a man whose dishonesty and criminal conduct they acknowledge — had nevertheless given them a probably true story, about some dealings he had had with MI5. So what? They then overlooked the need, when dealing with a dishonest witness, reliably to prove everything else he said. But such corroboration came only from another unreliable source, a confession made by Gentleman himself. In fact, the informant who tipped off *20/20 Vision* about Gentleman is currently awaiting trial. He appeared in court two weeks ago, charged with fraud and sexual offences.

20/20 Vision claimed that it is 'beyond dispute' that 'Brian Gentleman did genuinely confess to having passed information'. Unfortunately, in the case of the unfortunate Gentleman, this is no evidence that he genuinely *did* pass on information. Had *20/20 Vision* looked for and found such evidence, they would now have MI5 on the run — or have sewn up the case themselves.

THE ANCIENT WISDOM

There is a tradition that behind all the religions and philosophies, there is a vein of persisting truths which never change. They relate to the very nature of the Cosmos, both on the vast and the minute scale. We are in and of that nature. Makes you think – Yes?

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Sun isn't shining on Pluto

Nina Kidron, Pluto Press, London NW5

In November, Pluto Press publish *Lowest of the Low* by Gunter Wallraff, an investigative journalist who took on the multinational corporations and the state to expose single-handedly a great scandal — West Germany's treatment of its immigrant labour force. His covert, two-year, investigation has led to the exposure of corruption and villainy in high places, changes in the law, public outrage — and, deservedly, the biggest European bestseller since the war.

On 1 August, the *New Statesman* published an aricle by Jolyon Jenkins, who took on the mighty Pluto Press and exposed that times are hard for radical publishers. And, simply by getting most things a bit wrong in his five-minute telephone investigation, has made times even harder for those of us at Pluto.

Here are the facts: Allison & Busby and Pluto Press have had to wind up the small sales company they jointly owned, Volume Sales. In spite of its magnificent work, it was a financial drain on both companies. They could no longer afford to run it at a loss without jeopardising further jobs in the parent companies as well.

Your readers will know of the recent widespread redundancies in book and newspaper publishing. Sadly, Pluto is in no way exempt from being affected by such a hostile economic climate. Rumour has it that the *New Statesman* is suffering too. We at Pluto wish you well in the vital struggle to increase your readership and hope that the excellent editorial team will get the facts, as well as the figures, right in the future.

New look to 'break the mould'?

David Howarth, Cambridge

I hope that your 'new look' announced last week will make it easier to distinguish the *New Statesman* from *Labour Weekly*. Asking 'new questions of all shades of politics' is not exactly how I would describe Robin Cook MP's cheerful boosterism or Jack Straw MP's juvenile triumphalism (Fulham was 'far more significant than Newcastle-under-Lyme' was it? Why? Because it was in London, perhaps? And wouldn't 'a net gain of 485 seats' for Labour give it more seats than actually exist?).

Even Paul Hirst's 'Why parties cannot rule', which gave an elegant account of the SDP view of the world, had to pretend that it was contributing to an internal Labour Party debate.

Please, may we have more Broad Church and less Sect of True Believers?

Men waiting in the wings

M. Peters, Leeds 6

As a man I know I've no right to express any opinion about Rosalind Delmar's article ('Broken Agenda' *NS* 25 July) but surely I can be allowed to point out how *similar* are my own feelings — and those of some of my peers — about the transformations of 'the Left' during the last 15 years to those she describes about the Women's Liberation Movement.

Virtually everything she expresses about the promise of the early WLM and her regrets, for example, about 'unfinished debates' and 'the unfinished business of past campaigns waiting in the wings and remaking its entrance' has its resonance in the world outside feminism: *men* have had similar experiences, and maybe this is because some of the things she is describing are *not* exclusively problems or contradictions of the 'Women's Movement' at all. By the same token, maybe, some of the needs and desires she remembers were themselves not *solely* rooted in her status as a woman.

Buthelezi and sanctions

Brian Dooley, London SW11

Amid the debate concerning economic sanctions against South Africa, one prominent black leader, Chief Minister Buthelezi of Kwazulu, remains opposed to the idea.

Those who support the South African government claim that the strength of Buthelezi's 'cultural liberation' movement, Inkatha, is testimony to his political weight and influence among the nation's blacks. Inkatha followers are said to number a million and it is often reported as being highly organised with strong, grass-roots support. Buthelezi's support is centered around the Kwazulu ('home of the Zulus') and Natal areas in South Africa, where his political base and the seat of the Kwazulu government, Ulundi, is situated.

A few years ago I met Buthelezi on a visit to the Kwazulu Houses of Parliament and was invited to listen to a debate concerning a territorial squabble with Swaziland. Buthelezi seemed to be held in some kind of awe by his fellow-ministers and among the citizens of Ulundi.

However, when I returned recently to the (overwhelmingly Zulu) township where I was teaching, I found the opinion of Buthelezi was markedly different from that in Ulundi, especially among the young. Although those I spoke with were almost exclusively Zulus, they were less enthusiastic about their chief than many would have us believe. I spent seven months living and working in two large townships in Natal, Madadeni and Osizweni. As these areas are officially designated 'black only' and I am white, I was, of course, there illegally. Yet I spent nearly all of my time in these 'black only' areas, and listening to the attitudes of the blacks on various aspects of their life under apartheid: the pass laws, the Group Areas Act, the separation of their families because of the migration to the larger cities in search of work, the prospects for change, and, inevitably, black political leadership.

Many criticised Buthelezi for his willingness to co-operate with the South African government, for being distracted into involvement with minor issues (such as the argument with Swaziland) while the powerful apartheid machinery ground on. Although Buthelezi is a critic of apartheid and has refused to accept full homeland status for Kwazulu, against the South African government's wishes, his opposition has still been 'too soft' for many Zulus. At first Inkatha was supported by the ANC who saw it as helping to reinforce black conciousness. Yet Inkatha has remained overwhelmingly Zulu-centered and has been more concerned with promoting a Zulu-consciousness, bringing criticism from the ANC and other broad-based groups. This trend has given the impression of tribal rivalry and factionalism and has helped to

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produce an image of intra-black friction, an image cherished as valuable by those hoping to present blacks as incapable of self-government.

Buthelezi's refusal to insist on 'one-man-one-vote' for South Africans has further clouded his reputation among the township Zulus. Those with whom I spoke recognised their most credible leader as being Nelson Mandela. The fact that Mandela is not a Zulu but a Xhosa (whose numbers, incidentally, are at least as great as the Zulus), mattered little. Buthelezi's continued prominence is due not least to the South African government's willingness to present him as the acceptable face of black resistance to apartheid. Yet the younger generation of Zulus do not belong to Buthelezi and his influence should not be overestimated.

Scot Nats — not Alliance — set to gain

Hamish McBain, Morayshire

The Alliance, according to Robin Cook (*NS* 8 August), is set to gain seats in North East Scotland at the next general election from the Tories. Could he please explain how he reached this conclusion?

The sole piece of evidence provided, relating to this area, Table (1) *Tory Ministers at Risk*, certainly does not back his view of the state of play. Angus East MP Peter Fraser must be shaking in his boots at the prospect of an Alliance win given the majestic 7.4 per cent share of the vote they achieved in the recent regional elections. He knows, however, that the danger to his retaining the seat comes from the former MP for Angus, Andrew Welsh of the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP), and not from the Liberals or SDP (whichever of the two actually contests the seat). The fact that the SNP's share of the vote (40.2 per cent) was eight per cent higher than that of the Tories suggests that a nationalist victory is on the cards, a further pointer to nationalist success being that Angus district council is controlled by the SNP.

There is, moreover, little chance of the Alliance winning any of the seats quoted in the article; certainly not Angus East, Moray or Banff and Buchan which will all have SNP MPs following the next general election.

60 black people a week deported

Angela Somerton, Hull

I would like to draw readers' attention to the fact that between 5 July and 26 July around 40 members of the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign marched from Manchester to London. Viraj Mendis has lived in Manchester for the past 12 years. It is all too obvious that it is his activities as a leading anti-racist campaigner which have led to the decision to deport him. As a supporter of the Tamils Viraj Mendis faces arrest and persecution in his native Sri Lanka. Since all legal channels have been exhausted his only means of escape is via the application of public pressure.

New Statesman readers are doubtless well accustomed to reading requests such as mine. However, it must be remembered that on average 60 black people are deported every week. This represents an appalling attack upon the basic rights of black people; immediate action is essential.

Letters should be sent to local MPs, the Home Office at Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1 or to VMDC, Box 38, 434 Corn Exchange Buildings, Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4SN.

Science broadcasting

David Pavett, London W4

I can understand Anne Karpf's desire ('Enthralled by Science', *NS* 8 August) to see that the popularisation of science does not lose sight of its social context, but the condemnation of the current state of science broadcasting struck me as undifferentiated and unfair.

Horizon manages better than the 'gee whiz' approach that Anne Karpf thinks dominates science broadcasting. The last series included a programme which reviewed the development of scientific theories and suggested some very sceptical conclusions. Other topics have included the involvement of British science in military research, the subjective element in research and the arguments over nuclear power. Even programmes that concentrate on theoretical work endeavour to make the ideas comprehensible.

Radio Four's *Science Now* has been consistently good for years and is also concerned to present science as argument and debate. It spends a great deal of its time looking at the practical applications of various sciences. Listeners to *Scientifically Speaking* which ran for many years on Radio Three would have had a hard job seeing the scientists it presented as 'lone discoverers, impelled purely by their brainy capacity to invent'.

Anne Karpf's point that science is a social activity is merged into remarks about the falseness of the idea that 'science is neutral'. Science may well often serve some given social interest. It is obvious that results can transcend those interests and it does the popularisation of science no good to pretend otherwise. There is more to science broadcasting than *Tomorrow's World* and the like.

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People's grouse

Harry Hopkins

CHERNOBYL HAS BROUGHT a new twist to one of the most curious and hallowed of all English newspaper conventions: the assumption that, on 12 August, readers from Penge to Prestonpans, from Huddersfield to Hackney, awake with one question uppermost in their mind: Will the grouse be in good supply on the moors? This year, of course, the question has had to be slightly re-phrased: How many becquerels per kilogram in the birds? The top score, reported from Scotland, was 3,550. Well, it makes a change. For one thing, it gives 'triggered' a quite new meaning.

Just when and how 12 August became the 'Glorious Twelfth' seems, as they say, to be lost in the mists of time. Personally, I suspect some bright young sub-editor on the *Morning Post*, but the OED firmly traces 'The Twelfth' (ellipt.) to *The Field*, in 1868, and 'glory' does not descend for another 27 years, from the pen of one E. G. Mackenzie: 'The glorious twelfth! Despite the critical politics [the Kaiser was at loggerheads with Lord Salisbury at Cowes] the fine weather and the certainty of sport has again filled all the saloon carriages bound northwards.' No caps, yet, please note, but at least an exclamation mark.

In sober truth, as this suggests, *Lagopus Scoticus* made a rather late debut in the star game role, having to await the spread of the breech-loader gun and the extension of the railway to Perth and beyond. The succession of creatures favoured by the gentry as 'game', going back to Norman times, runs: the deer, the hare, the partridge, the pheasant. And it was only the latter, because of its willingness to be bred in captivity, that allowed the great Victorian efflorescence of game-preserving and battue shooting, becoming by 1902 (in Kipling's phrase) 'the master of many a shire'.

Yet, as it flashes over the guns, the red grouse carries on its whirring wings an accumulation of symbolism so heavy that it's a wonder that it can take off. Within the butts, it is the badge of rank and God-given privilege, its manifest destiny to provide refreshment for Tory politicians exhausted by their parliamentary labours. Outside the butts, it is an unrivalled *agent provocateur*, flaunting class tyranny and social injustice and the whole vast, bitter and bloody legacy of the Game Law struggle.

From the time of the limb-severing, tongue-tearing 'Norman Oppressors', who claimed that all 'game' was the King's, the internecine war of the woods and hedgerows has been, as Trevelyan noted, 'without a truce'. It merely became more resonant, embattled and vicious as population and fire-power soared.

Over the years, the game laws have embodied, in the most stark and intrusive form, the old John-Ball-Genesis-Chapter-One issue of the people's rights to the land and the fruits thereof. If an Englishman might not take a wild hare, wherein lay his boasted freedom? An answer of sorts may be said to have finally come from David Lloyd George, the landlord-killer (and a man known in his Welsh youth as 'the poachers' lawyer').

But why, if they were so politically potent, have the poaching wars been so largely left out of the mainstream of our history? It is a question which might repay study. For one thing, this is, even now, what the Americans call 'a sensitive area'. Its very political centrality makes academic historians queasy, fearful for their scholarly objectivity. They prefer their material decently embalmed, not twitching under the dissecting knife. Like lawyers — and for similar reasons — their profession makes for conservatism. If rural history is so often seen from the perspective of the *piano nobile*, that is because the 'stately home' is an overwhelming Fact. To start probing about behind it, to inquire too closely how it got there, is to invite excommunication for partisanship.

Granted that in recent years 'history from below' has enjoyed a minor vogue. But professional historians prefer intensive to extensive cultivation, which may interfere over the years with longer vision. The plots are well marked out: 'Enclosures'; 'Chartism'; 'the Poor Law'; 'Luddites'. Poaching, besides being against the law, has not been marked out (although one or two Canadians have had a try), so it cannot be 'History'. That is why I find my recent book on the poaching wars* among the Pied Wagtails and Dartford Warblers on the Natural History shelves of the best London bookshops.

A further point. The test of virtue for academic historians is the presentation of irrefutable *proof*. It is just unfortunate that there are so few things in history, as in life, which can in fact be proved. The bitter passions festering in some mid-19th-century village do not lend themselves to correlation graphs and the crime figures are merely the tip of the iceberg. Yet, over the years, I suspect that the desperate deeds in the dark woods — and certainly the distress — would rival the casualty figures of our official Civil War. Cranborne Chase is more blood-soaked than Naseby Field.

'Further research', as they say, 'is needed.'

One suggestion: call in the amateurs. Britain has several hundred local history societies, ardent, hard-digging, without academic axes to grind. If, instead of dabbling in antiquarianism, these sleuths could somehow be unleashed on the unsolved problems of history, what rich new areas might be turned up? They are ideally placed for the enlargement of 'history from below'. Material is not lacking. Poaching crimes, for instance: one visualises them putting down bore-holes in their various patches, scrutinising the drill cores, preparing new maps of the real run of the strata . . . Perhaps what History needs is a DIY extension. For History — as that 'notorious poacher' James Hawker claimed of the land — belongs to the people. □

*The Long Affray: The Poaching Wars in Britain *(Macmillan, £6.95)*.

Damon Burnard

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Grape shot

Stephen Brook

ROY JENKINS HAS always had more than his fair share of insufferable qualities but he is unjustly pilloried for his fondness for wine.

It is indicative of the British devotion to inverse snobberies that your choice of tipple should be regarded as having an umbilical connection with your class, politics, aspirations, whatever. Try explaining to, say, the Communist mayor or Bologna or your average Socialist deputy in the French parliament that wine isn't really a suitable drink for stalwarts of the Left and you would be greeted with dazed incomprehension. Yet, in Britain, until recently, wine was regarded as the preserve of the well-to-do, in mystical association with Oxbridge colleges, Pall Mall clubs and Special Occasions.

No longer, thank God. When, some 20 years ago, I attained the legal drinking age, a bottle of almost potable wine cost four times as much as a pint of bitter.

Now, thanks to the greed of brewers, the over-production of wine growers and the enterprise of wine shippers, you can trade two pints of beer (at London prices) for an acceptable bottle of Dao or Bulgarian Cabernet or Navarra. Wine is no longer a luxury item. Even though we labour under the fiscal disadvantages of having to import almost all the wine we consume, there is still a superb choice on offer, far greater than in all other European countries, where chauvinism dictates availability.

Inevitably, we tend to be overwhelmed by this choice. Wine regions are pounced upon and *appellations* such as Muscadet and Sancerre become the flavour of the year. Ninety per cent of the wines bearing those labels are mediocre at best, unpalatable at worst. In buying wine, as with most commodities, you usually get what you pay for.

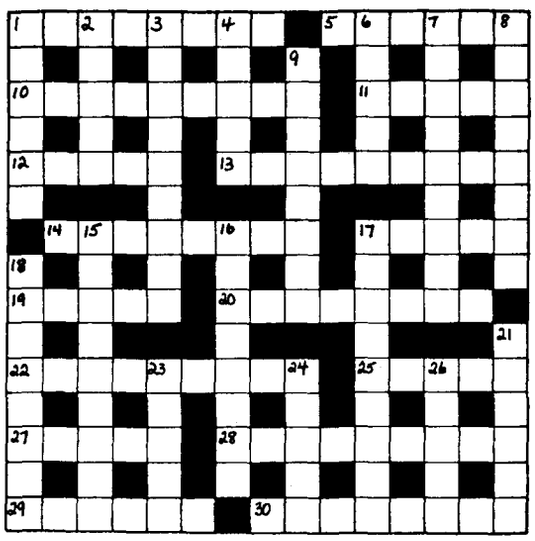
Yet here too there are traps for the unwary. High prices are often dictated by scarcity as much as quality. It is hard, for instance, to buy a decent bottle of Burgundy for under ten pounds; but Burgundy is a relatively small region and its wines will always be expensive, and that applies to the bad wines as well as the good. At those prices, you are unwise to experiment. A poor wine is always a disheartening experience, but a poor wine at fifteen pounds a throw is heartbreaking.

There is a middle ground. If Burgundies are both expensive and unreliable and clarets, while less chancey, beyond the budgets of most of us, there are dozens of other wine regions

Damon Burnard

Weekend Crossword 1528

PRIZE: £10 Book Token for the first correct solution opened. Entries to Crossword 1528, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU by first post 26 August.



Name .....

Address .....

ACROSS

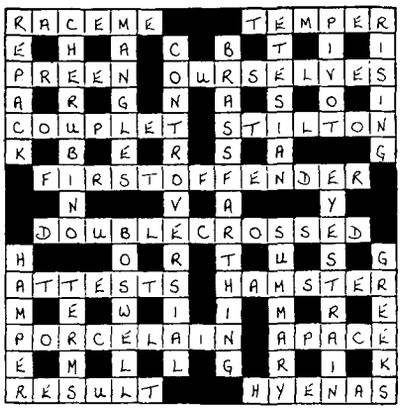
1 Happy but making me go to pieces if there are no boys (8)
5 Spells of writing after holiday places (6)
10 Writer who sees unusual service with the Royal Navy (9)
11 A woman acquires something subtle after she is fifty (5)
12 Old statesman needed about a thousand for the town (5)
13 Turning brave in an icy place beside the water (9)
14 Fought when made redundant (8)
17 Man back in the open air breathing freely (5)
19 Bands introduce love into dances (5)
20 Drink which is mixed in the basin (8)
22 The northerner is one who makes ground on his knees (9)
25 Weaver as composer (5)
27 Home in a wig looking unusually smart (5)
28 The unnamed object is slight and sticky (9)
29 Good news takes one turn and almost another (6)
30 Need I err when turning into an animal? (8)

DOWN

1 Wounds suffered by a girl in school (6)
2 Pungent as help without credit (5)
3 Where you can get evens on a race (9)
4 About four this worker would make fur (5)
6 The town has lost its doctor and so is less healthy looking (5)
7 Easily shocked when West turns up in the marmalade (9)
8 Boasting one would be ruler once the bird has flown (8)
9 Supplies a poet in most of the papers (8)
15 Voting among the masses will do for stupid people (9)
16 Praise from an archbishop among the graves (8)
17 Where ambitious musicians are to be found? (9)
18 Compose verse about the misery when there is a bombardment (8)
21 One who gives money is about right for entreaty (6)
23 Got up as a flower (5)
24 Glorify without head to lift up (5)
26 It is sweet when the plane has its tail shot off (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1526


RACEME TEMPER
E H A C B T I I
PREEN OURSELYES
A R G N A S O I
COUPLET STILTON
K B E R S G
FIRSTOFFENDER
N V A Y
DOUBLECROSSED
H O R T U S G
ATTESTS HAMSTER
M E W I I M R E
PORCELAIN APACE
E M L L G R I K
RESULT HYENAS

Prizewinner to 1526

Catrin Green
(Cardiff)

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that offer excellent wines at fair prices. There is no point moaning about, for example, the absurdly high prices of 1985 clarets. Don't buy them.

Few of us have much choice in the matter anyhow. Fortunately the world is awash with good bottles of honestly made wines that, while lacking the supreme qualities of the great growths, nevertheless fulfil their primary functions more than adequately: of quenching a summer thirst or accompanying a good meal.

A FEW DECADES ago, winemakers were at the mercy of the climate. Natural disasters could come charging through the vineyards in the form of phylloxera, mildew and grey rot. Hailstones can still reduce vine leaves to shredded cabbage and untimely frosts can lay low acre upon acre of previously healthy vineyards, but efficient pruning and spraying now take care of most of the diseases and sophisticated vinification techniques allow large wineries, including the many large cooperatives that dominate much of southern France and Italy, to make wine, year in, year out, that is usually acceptable if not often brilliant. Disappointing wine is still common enough; disgusting wine has become increasingly rare.

While visiting the Tiefenbrunner winery in the Tyrol this spring, I overheard a German client commenting on how ignorant the British were about wine matters. He was wrong: our connoisseurship has been forced upon us.

With no local supply of our own, we have learnt to discriminate among the thousands of wines that the world eagerly offers us. If French and German winemakers are to be believed, the overwhelming majority of their wine-buying compatriots are interested in one factor only: price. Here in Britain, where we have to pay far more for our wine than do the bibulous Europeans, we are increasingly anxious to get value for our money. Unlike the French, we cannot trot down to the local *cave* and fill up a row of five-litre flagons with *ordinaire*. We can only buy wine in bottles and the growing army of wine drinkers is demanding something better than the abominations that used to line off-licence wine shelves.

The wine merchants of Britain have met this demand and, at long last, wine in Britain is becoming the regular meal-side companion of millions.

Its exclusivity is on the wane. We may gasp at the trifling sums our grandparents used to pay for their claret and port but, in relation to the cost of living decades ago, wine was surely more, not less, expensive.

Wine has become gloriously accessible and, in the course of future columns, I hope to hack a way through this jungle, sidestepping the swamps of Hype and Fad in order to consider issues that engross the wine world, to examine wine regions familiar and obscure and to introduce wines of quality, character and style. □

Stephen Brook's travel book The Dordogne *will be published by George Philip on 25 September. His wine column will be appearing every four weeks in the* Statesman. *Next week, food: Colin Spencer unravels the confusion surrounding Healthy Eating.*

Weekend competition

No 2937 Set by Wayne Sidesaddle

In apologising for the fact that 'strew with fresh parsley and chives' had appeared in a *Spectator* salad recipe as '*stew* with fresh parsley and chives', the cookery columnist laughingly added that her readers were surely too intelligent not to have spotted the error. Well, maybe. Could we please have apologies from cookery columnists, DIY writers, beauty advisors, etc. for similar misprints that might, if followed, have led to assorted disasters? Max. 120 words by 28 August.

No 2934 Set by E. O. Parrott

Sonnet versions of famous 20th-century novels.

Report By Babe Bio

Space problems, as usherl — its a bit like working at NASA, here — so Ill just give a qwick spesherl menshern to David Butler (for a sonet vershon of *Catch 22* no less), Vicky Cornford, George Moor, Noel Petty and Eric Swainson. Ten quid a head to the jeeniuses printed below.

Norman Mailer's An American Dream

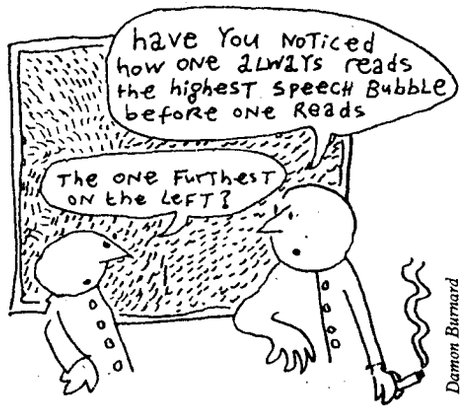
When Rojak, in a jealous, drunken rage,
First strangles then defenestrates his wife,
He finds he has escaped the vicious cage
Of *mauvaise foi* and found authentic life.
The existentialist has so much leeway:
He gets away with murder, first of all,
Then pokes his dong up Ruta's chocolate freeway
And rides the balcony without a fall.
Not even Barney Kelly can defeat him,
For Shago's magic brolly is his totem,
While Cherry's always overjoyed to meet him
And welcome the emissions of his scrotum.
What man can do, Rojak or Mailer can,
In old Manhattan or in Yucatan.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Evelyn Waugh's Brideshead Revisited

Religion, beauty, riches, love and doom:
Charles Ryder meets the lot when young Seb Flyte
(Of visage epicene) espies his room
And vomits on the carpet late one night.
Love blooms, and simple Charles is overawed
By this lad's family, the Marchmain mob
(A titled, selfish, guilt-racked, Papist horde,
Thus proving Ryder nothing but a snob).
Sebastian, who's wiser, loathes them all
And drowns his angst in vats of vintage red,
Then does a bunk. Charles, grieving, pays a call
On winsome sister Julia instead.
He ends up wifeless, loveless — soulless too,
As idle, moneyed twits deserve to do.

LISSA EVANS



Damon Burnard

Kingsley Amis' Lucky Jim

Jim's a young lecturer in history,
The maverick member of a Redbrick team;
Just why he chose the job's a mystery:
He simply loathes the groves of academe.
He has a trick of pulling silly faces,
Expressing rage, or the desire to spit,
A repertoire of ludicrous grimaces,
'Sex Life in Ancient Rome' his favourite.
Dead drunk while lecturing, he passes out,
A cause of public scandal and concern,
His tutoring career goes up the spout;
But Fate is kind. Things take a sudden turn.
He lands another — better — job (trust him)
And gets the girl he's after. Lucky Jim!

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

Proust's Remembrance of Things Past

I dunked a madelaine in my cup of tea:
At once I was a small boy in Combray
Tasting the crumbs my frail Aunt Leonie
Gave to me every Sunday of our stay.
I found I could relive my life, misspent
(My anxious parents thought) among great snobs,
Bohemians, gays and demi-mondaines bent
On trivial pursuits; recall the sobs
Of unrequited love for Gilberte Swann
And then for Albertine, who flew the nest
Leaving me to the mercy of my bonne —
My mother having died who loved me best.
I stumbled upon friends racked by time past
And knew I must get writing pretty fast.

MARGARET ROGERS

Samuel Beckett's Molloy

Old man Molloy is in his mother's bed;
Impotent, mad. It's he who lives there now.
Memories, incoherent, throng his head.
He has survived thus far, he knows not how,
Wandered from one strange happening to another
In quest of 'Mag', whose small gifts keep him dying.
No bike or woman stays him long. His mother
Has drawn him to this bed on which he's lying.
But there's a younger self whom we meet later,
Well-organised, obsessionally neat,
Respectable, a secret masturbator,
Who goes in search of 'Dan' on well-shod feet,
But meets a ghastly happening in a wood:
Murder, too dreadful to be understood.

GERARD BENSON

Nancy Mitford's The Pursuit of Love

A cupboard was the Hons' best school
At Alconleigh, in Gloucestershire,
With Uncle Matthew, hunting squire,
Renowned for his entrenching tool.
Linda, that tender-hearted piece,
Rebelled against Life's formal dance,
Fled first to Spain and then to France
Where she found bliss with dear Fabrice.
War came, its pity and its pain,
So home to Alconleigh again
Came Linda, Fanny and the brood,
With Davey, picking at his food,
Until The Bolter's Juan, with passion,
Transmogrified the basic ration.

HAZEL STANLEY

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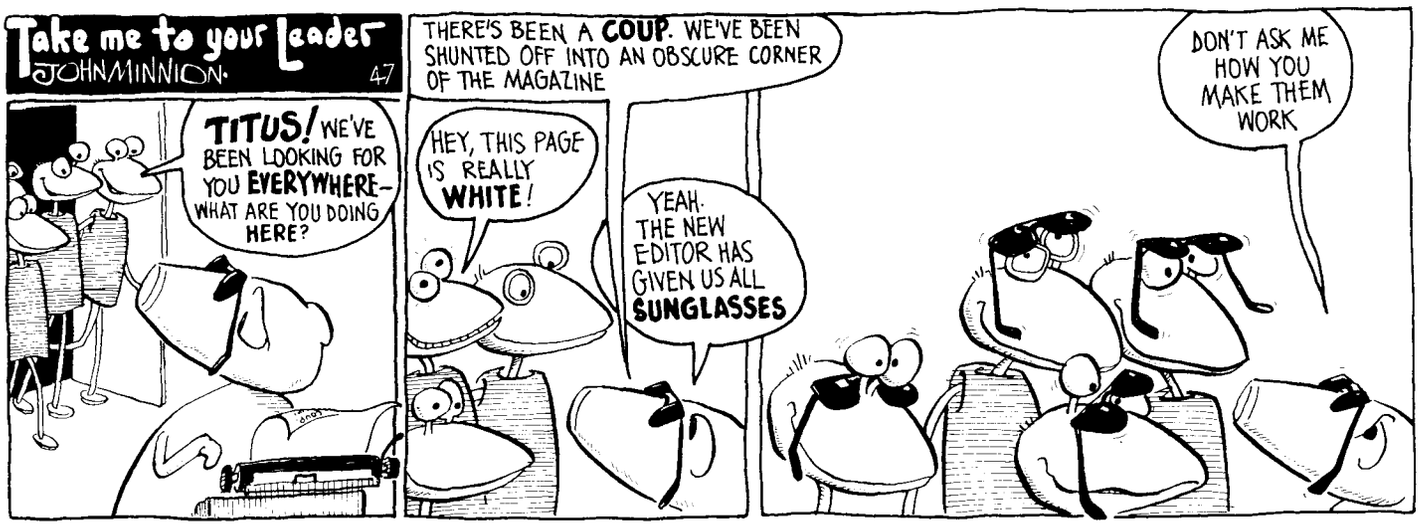
Take me to your Leader
JOHN MINNION 47
TITUS! WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU EVERYWHERE— WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
THERE'S BEEN A COUP. WE'VE BEEN SHUNTED OFF INTO AN OBSCURE CORNER OF THE MAGAZINE
HEY, THIS PAGE IS REALLY WHITE!
YEAH. THE NEW EDITOR HAS GIVEN US ALL SUNGLASSES
DON'T ASK ME HOW YOU MAKE THEM WORK

Chess

WHILE KARPOV had been rather fortunate to hold game 2, he was unable to prevent Kasparov from cashing in his next White in game 4. Once again the champion applied nagging pressure in a nearly symmetrical position, netted the Black a-pawn and advanced his own to a6. That was enough to induce Karpov to resign in the adjournment without resuming. As he had made no progress at all with the white pieces in games 1 and 3 the challenger needed to change his approach. Obviously Karpov could not afford to continue playing quietly with White and getting squashed with Black. So would he call a time-out, the prescribed balm for the wound of defeat? Instead he dived straight into a complicated variation which produced the most exciting game of the match so far.

Karpov-Kasparov, game 5, 6 August. Grünfeld Defence.
1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 d5 4. Bf4 Bg7 5. e3 c5 6. dxc5 Qa5 7. cxd5. In game 1 he had played 7. Rcl, allowing Kasparov easy equality with 7 . . . dxc4. **Ne4 8. Rcl Nxc3 9. Qd2 Qxa2 10. bxc3 Qxd2 +** This must be one of Kasparov's prepared innovations, the normal move being 10 . . . Qa5. It may be an improvement, in spite of the outcome. **11. Kxd2 Nd7 12. Bb5 0-0 13. Bxd7 Bxd7 14. e4 f5** To create a target on e5 before White can consolidate with Be3. **15. e5 e6** A questionable decision which ultimately leads to the entombment of his bishops. A variation to consider is 15 . . . Rfc8 16. e6 Ba4 17. Be3 Bb3 18. c4 and now 18 . . . b5! (Speelman) seems to break up the White pawn-front. **16. c4 Rfc8 17. c6! bxc6 18. d6 c5** If instead 18 . . . g5 19. Bxg5 Bxe5 20. c5 White gets control by seizing the e5 square. **19. h4 h6 20. Nh3** Here rather than f3 for two reasons: he wants to barricade the long white diagonal with f2-f3 and the knight is needed on d3 to attack c5 and defend b2. **a5 21. f3 a4 22. Rhel a3 23. Nf2 a2 24. Nd3 Ra3 25. Ral g5?** A piece of mis-timing that must have involved a tactical oversight. Black surely gets more play with 25 . . . Rb8 when White has to choose between 26. Nxc5 Rb2+ 27. Kc1 Rxg2 28. Bd2! and 26. Ke2. **26. hxg5 hxg5 27. Bxg5 Kf7** A distress signal. Presumably Kasparov had been intending 27 . . . Rb8 but now saw a refutation. Speelman pointed out the remarkable possibility 27 . . . Rb8 28. Bf4 Rbb3 29. Re3 Rb1 30. Nxc5!? Rxe3 31. Rxa2. But Karpov would probably have preferred the calm and efficient 28. Ke2. **28. Bf4** Now Black has spent his break and Karpov has total control. **Rb8 29. Rec1 Bc6 30. Rc3 Ra5 31. Rc2 Rba8 32. Nc1 1-0.** Magnificently powerful and accurate play by Karpov to level the score.

In the British Championship in Southampton Truro schoolboy Michael Adams finally met with defeat at the hands of Jonathan Mestel in round 8. Yet his logical and mature play in the first seven rounds showed that we have another prospect comparable to Nigel Short (who, incidentally, was not playing in Southampton owing to a sinus operation). Here is another win by Mestel, who has been in prime form throughout the tournament, though one must sympathise with Mark Hebden who was playing under the burden of the news that his father had died suddenly of a heart attack.

Hebden-Mestel, Kleinwort Grieveson British Ch., Rd. 6. Sicilian.
1. e4 c5 2. f4 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 e6 5. Nf3 Nc6 6. g3 Nf6 7. Nf2 g6 8. Bg2 Bg7 9. 0-0 0-0. 10. Nd3 Ng4! 11. Nxc5 Qb6 12. d4 Nxd4 13. Nxd4 Qxc5 14. Qxg4 e5 15. Qf3 e4! 16. Qxe4 Bf5 17. Qxb7 Bxd4 + 18. Kh1 Qxc2 Black's pieces dominate the board. **19. Qb3 Rac8 20. Qxc2 Rxc2 21. Re1 Rb8 22. Bd5 Rd8 23. Bb3 Rf2 24. h4 Bg4 25. Bd1 Bd7 0-1.**

Mestel might well have won outright. As the boards thinned out in the final round he tried everything possible against Flear. His advantage grew until finally he reached a position from which, the following morning after a sleepless night of Rooks and Pawns dancing through his head, he was able to demonstrate a win. But close to midnight he faltered through fatigue and allowed a draw. An agony of wasted effort, and yet somehow it seemed appropriate that the three best players should tie for first. They must now contest a play-off to decide who takes on the US champion. Leading scores: 1-3. Chandler, Mestel and Speelman 8pts.; 4-5. Flear and King 7½. Michael Adams got 7 and an IM norm.

George Botterill

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This England

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Home Office research into police relations with the public has pointed the finger at an unnecessary cause of friction — officers' tight-fitting leather gloves. They are so uncomfortable that police try to stretch them by punching one hand into the other. But to the man in the street this looks like an aggressive gesture, the Home Office Research Study on Police-Public Encounters said. — *Greenock Telegraph* (A. A. Rae)

Housing officials in Sedgley have removed a recording of *Home Sweet Home* from a computerised telephone switchboard in their new offices. Callers complaining about their housing conditions became angry when they were put on hold and had to listen to the tune, which was installed by British Telecom engineers as a means of soothing people waiting to speak to officials. — *Guardian* (Ken Crichton)

The East Essex Health Authority recently decided to launch a 'Better Health' campaign in the area, for which a logo featuring a cardiogram was designed at great expense. Only at the last minute was it realised that the cardiogram showed the patient to be dead. — *Daily Telegraph* (David Bays)

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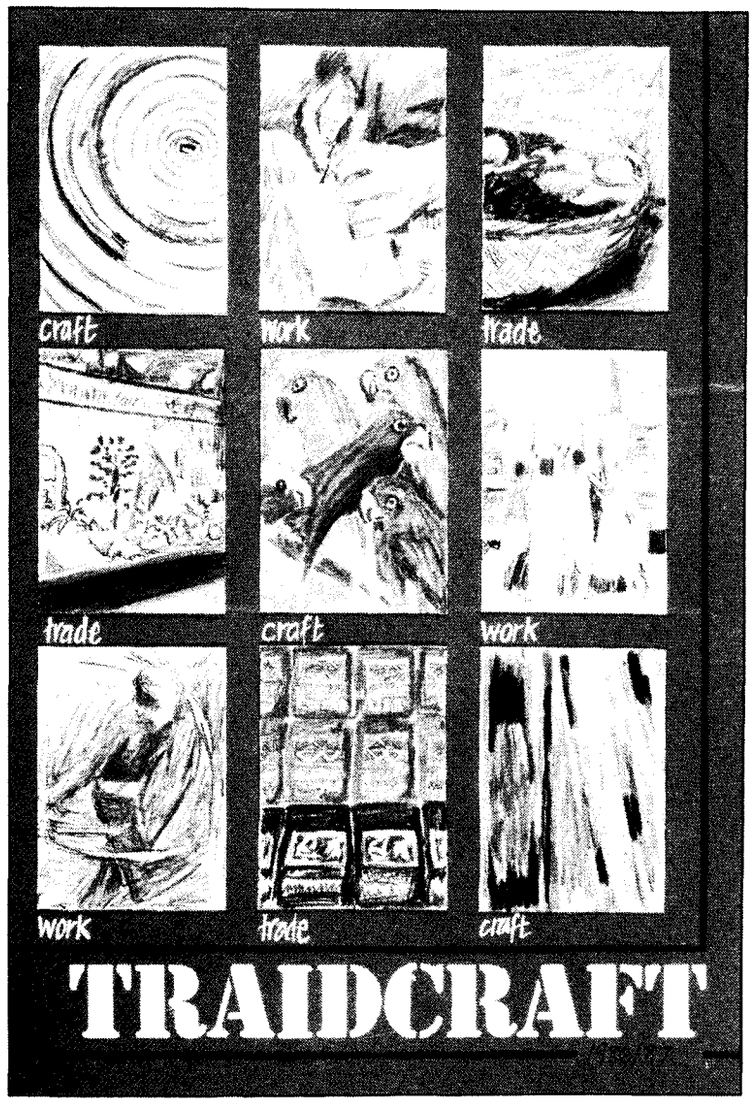

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